

Commentary

Volume Fifty-two, Number Five November 1971

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Confessions of a Visiting Professor Dan Jacobson

Walking Distance -- A Story Norma Rosen

The (Freudian) Congress of Vienna Edith Kurzweil

Counting Jews Ruth Gay

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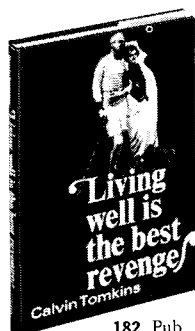
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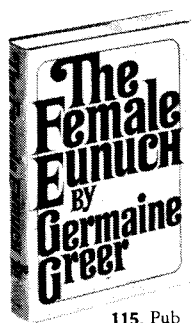


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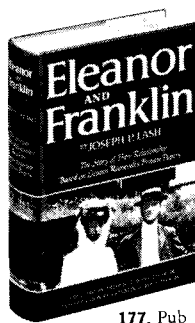
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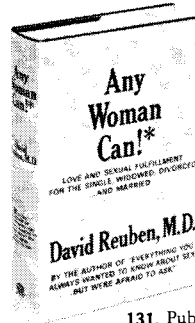
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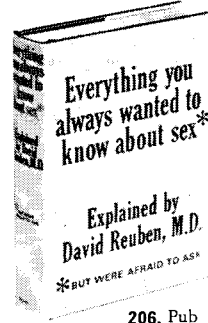
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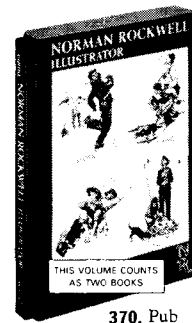
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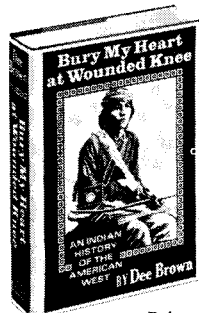
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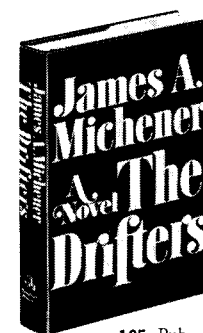
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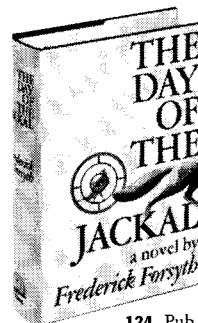
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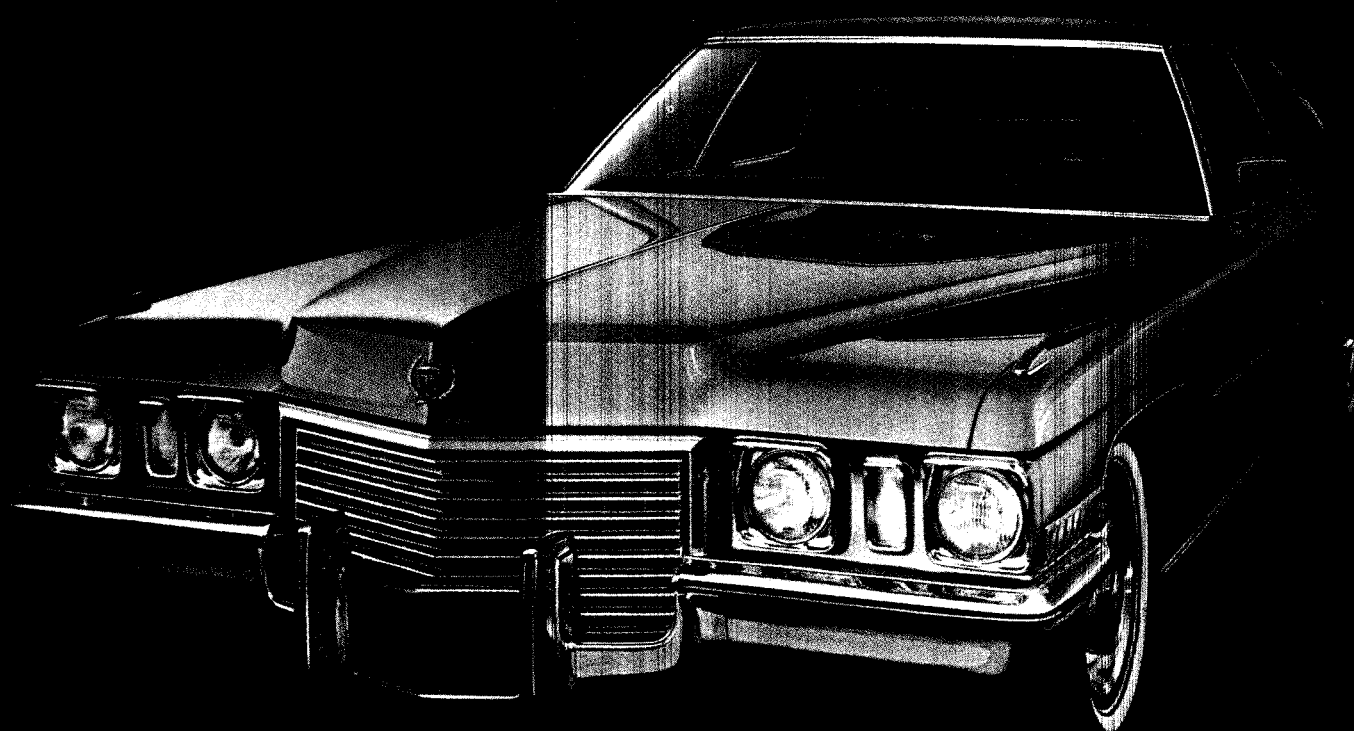


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Liberty & the Intellectuals

Norman Podhoretz

THERE can be no question that Norman Gall (p. 45) is right in saying that the "literary reputation" of the Cuban Revolution has been very seriously damaged in the past year or two and that this in itself constitutes an important political event, quite apart from whatever changes in the actual policies of the Castro regime may or may not have provoked it. The books Mr. Gall discusses, especially those by René Dumont and K. S. Karol, do indeed signify the growth of a newly critical and even hostile attitude toward the Cuban Revolution among a certain class of intellectuals all over the world.

I say "a certain class" because there are intellectual circles in which the reputation of the Cuban Revolution began to fall as early as the early 1960's. Writing in this magazine in February 1962, for example, Dennis H. Wrong spoke of the alarm such critics as Theodore Draper, Daniel M. Friedenberg, Michael Harrington, and other "old anti-totalitarians of the Left" felt at the suppression by Castro of "freedom from arbitrary arrest, the right to a fair and open trial, freedom of the press, the right to maintain free trade unions independent of government control." Nevertheless it is probably true to say that until very recently Castro's apologists outnumbered his critics among the intellectuals of Paris and outnumbered them as well, though no doubt to a lesser extent, among the intellectuals of London and New York.

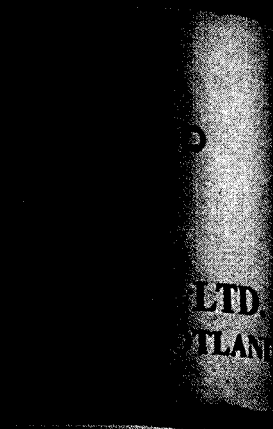
But a statistical description like this puts the case much too mildly and even misleadingly, for it does not begin to suggest the intensity and vividness of pro-Castro sentiment among those intellectuals of the Left who came to share in it. "You were," said Norman Mailer in an Open Letter to Castro writ-

ten not long after he had come to power and published originally in the *Village Voice*, "the first and greatest hero to appear since the Second War." Sentiments barely less extravagant were expressed by C. Wright Mills, Jean-Paul Sartre, and dozens of younger literary people like Kenneth Tynan, Warren Miller, and LeRoi Jones, who were associated with what only just then was beginning to be widely known as the New Left. Some of this euphoria was dampened and some of Castro's early support faded or disappeared entirely as the "new humanist socialism" for which he was believed to stand began looking more and more like the old totalitarian socialism of the Soviet Union and China. But apologists continued to insist that Cuba was different or, if not entirely different, justified in being similar by the exigencies of revolution and by the dangers of American intervention.

As the 60's wore on, moreover, and as the ethos of the New Left increased in influence, a mystique of violent revolution acquired a correlatively greater and greater force with the radical intellectuals of the West and those of the young under their tutelage. Among other things this led to the beatification of Che Guevara as the saint of revolution and of Castro himself as the great sponsor of popular uprisings against "imperialism" throughout Latin America and the inspiration for such uprisings in the rest of the "Third World" as well. Some, incredibly enough, even found him relevant to the situation in the United States. In the climate of the mid- and late 60's, this new reputation more than compensated the Castro regime for the loss of lustre it had suffered in the eyes of other intellectuals of the Left whose sympathies did not



As you're fighting your way to the top
it helps to have a taste of what's up there.



embrace the suppression of political freedom and the stifling of the right of dissent even, or perhaps especially, when done in the name of socialism. (Thus Irving Howe in a recent issue of *Dissent*: "The central lesson of politics in our century has been that *any* regime that suppresses democratic liberties has no right, political or moral, to the designation of 'socialism.' . . .")

A YEAR or so ago, however, a change in attitude toward Castro was beginning to become evident among intellectuals for whom the Cuban Revolution had always been "a model in the realm of socialism." Dumont and Karol, the one an erstwhile adviser to Castro and the other an unregenerate defender of revolutionary-socialist regimes, published accounts so highly critical of the situation in Cuba that Castro denounced them as agents of the CIA. The charge was so absurd that not even Sartre was able to take it seriously. On the contrary, Sartre himself and some sixty other European intellectuals joined last May in protesting the arrest of the Cuban poet Heberto Padilla and in condemning the obviously extorted "confession" he issued upon being released from prison. The whole episode, they declared, "recall[s] the most sordid moments of the era of Stalinism, with its prefabricated verdicts and its witch-hunts."*

How can we account for this reversal? Mr. Gall believes that the Padilla case—in combination with the increasing militarization of Cuban society to which Dumont, Karol, and other long-time defenders of the regime testify—represents an end to the "libertarian pretensions" of the Cuban Revolution and an open break with the "Western intellectual tradition." Not being an expert on the history of the Cuban Revolution, I would not presume to argue with this judgment. Yet I cannot help wondering whether it is really Castro who has changed: whether it is he who has broken with his former supporters abroad by breaking

with an "intellectual tradition" all of them once held dear, or whether the change is actually in them—in, that is, their willingness to justify and apologize for anything he might find it necessary or expedient to do. After all, as Mr. Gall himself points out, Castro's libertarian pretensions never went so far as to prevent him from holding some twenty thousand political prisoners in jail. Nor did these same pretensions extend to permitting the open expression of opposition to his policies and actions. Conversely, up until May of this year, the old pro-Castro intellectuals continued to regard Cuba "as a model in the realm of socialism" despite the fact—a fact whose reality or whose significance they were by no means hesitant to deny—that civil and political liberties were cruelly and ruthlessly suppressed.

In short, if the imprisonment of Hubert Matos and so many thousands of others who have languished in jail for years could not arouse the libertarian ire of the radical intelligentsia of Paris and New York, why should the arrest of Heberto Padilla have done so?

It would be pleasant to think that the answer lies in a new concern for liberty among the radical intellectuals of the West. Yet if this were the case, the signers of the protest would not be likely to say, as they still do, that the Castro regime has in the past been "exemplary in its respect for the human being." My own guess is that the Padilla affair has served these intellectuals as a convenient pretext for jettisoning Castro and the Cuban Revolution, not for the crime of Stalinism (although the regime is certainly guilty of that) but for the crime of failure: the failure of Che's effort to foment revolution in other Latin American countries and the concomitant failure, so graphically described in Mr. Gall's article, to fulfill the revolution at home.

But if the Cuban Way, the way of revolutionary militancy, has failed, the Chilean Way—the way of the Popular Front, the way of alliances with other liberal and left-wing forces—has to everyone's surprise succeeded, if not yet in consummating a revolution, at

least in bringing a national Communist party to power peacefully through the electoral process for the very first time in history. We get some idea of what this extraordinary and indeed unique development means for intellectuals of revolutionist sympathies from a recent article by E. J. Hobsbawm, the British Marxist historian, in the *New York Review of Books*. Hobsbawm sees the effort of the Allende government to travel an alternative road to "socialism" not as "a piece of political exoticism" (like Cuba?) but as a "thrilling prospect and a politically valuable one." For "socialism," says Hobsbawm, will never come to "say, Western Europe in the Chinese or Vietnamese way"—or, as he conspicuously fails to add, the Cuban way—"but it is at least possible to recognize in Chile the lineaments of political situations that might occur in industrialized societies, and the strategies that might apply there. . . ." How can poor Castro compete with this? No wonder violence and confrontation are out; no wonder "working within the system" is in.

True to the spirit of the Popular Front, Hobsbawm stresses Allende's devotion to political liberty, asserting that it is a principled commitment and not a tactical maneuver destined to be dropped at the first viable opportunity. Well, perhaps. Perhaps also the intellectuals who have broken with Castro and who are suddenly so full of devotion to liberty and democracy really do mean what they say and are not being tactical themselves—that is, serving political liberty because they think that doing so serves the revolution, just as they thought only yesterday that the best way to serve the revolution was to deride liberty as a bourgeois illusion or a luxury of the rich. But in view of their sorry record on these matters, those of us within the intellectual community for whom political liberty is a primary value and not a merely instrumental one, strictly subordinate to the revolutionary cause, can, I think, be forgiven our wariness, our skepticism, and our altogether ungenerous suspicion as to whether Castro's loss of intellectual support is also liberty's permanent gain. ■

* The full text of this statement was published in the *New York Times* on May 22, 1971.



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Letters from Readers

History & Historians

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One can certainly not accuse J. H. Hexter of backing away from a good fight. "Doing History" [June]—like all Mr. Hexter's writings—is witty and persuasive. In spite of my general agreement with his argument, I nevertheless take issue with his essay on a few points.

Mr. Hexter suggests at the outset that E. H. Carr's thesis—i.e., the historian's work mirrors the society in which he works—is unsound. On the contrary, Mr. Hexter maintains "... that preeminently the society which professional historians are members of, belong to, work in, is the society of professional historians." This, I think, is a point that needs to be remembered—but *not necessarily to the exclusion of Carr's*. After all, historians usually live in rather close proximity to non-historians, read newspapers (one hopes!) published and written by non-historians, buy groceries from non-historians, pay rent and/or taxes to non-historians, and are usually married to non-historians. In short, a large part of their professional lives (not to mention nearly all of their lives prior to their entrance into a novitiate) is spent talking to, learning from, and living with people outside the historical profession. If these experiences in *no way* impinge on their professional lives, they are downright sociopathic. And most of my historian friends are not especially sociopathic. The point of all this is that most of the canons of taste and criticism to which historians subscribe neither simply mirror those of the society in which they work, nor are they wholly unique.

On another score, Mr. Hexter spends a considerable amount of time and space describing the means by which historians evaluate each other's written work. The means, Mr. Hexter writes, is judgment by peers. With wit and common sense he describes the mechanism of judgment by peers and its numerous consequences. That accomplished, he wholeheartedly endorses it. The description seems altogether accurate, and the value judgment is one with which I am in accord. The problem, however,

is that in practice the mechanism fails with greater regularity than it does in theory. If it worked as it *ought* to work, and as Mr. Hexter implies that it *does* work, many historians in positions of status and power would be lower in the academic pecking order than they in fact are. Again, if the mechanism were as reliable as Mr. Hexter implies, men like himself would have risen to the top at a faster clip than in fact they did.

Which is only to say that the world J. H. Hexter portrays with such approval is possessed of more meanness than he allows. The situation is probably not so bleak as some suggest, but it scarcely justifies Hexter's Panglossian rhetoric.

EDWARD KERSON

New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

J. H. Hexter provides some useful insights into the society of historians to which he belongs. But some unfinished business remains.

Mr. Hexter's ambivalent treatment of historian Jesse Lemisch raises—and then drops—a most tantalizing question. Historians in, around, and in spite of, the profession have indeed held a variety of positions on the relative value of historical questions and methods. Whether "conservative" and "radical" are instructive labels for these historiographical differences remains unsettled. But it borders on the dogmatic pluralism of the end-of-ideology school to reduce the relevant evidentiary questions to matters of slightness or abundance, dubiousness or trustworthiness.

Historians are no more or less neutral than economists or journalists. By expressing a preference for one question which is thought to be "better" than another, members of all three groups lose any claim to "neutrality." This is not to deny that each of these groups can tell us something about the world and about ourselves. Nonetheless, the choice of one set of questions over another may very well flow from one's political *Weltanschauung*. Hence, there may be organizations with vested interests in *not* probing too deeply the sociopolitical ramifications of business-as-usual.

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his witty commentary . . . J. H. Hexter offers some examples of the use of the "splendid and versatile" footnote as an instrument of either praise or blame. One of its versatilities is that a footnote can both praise and blame the same article, praise it for the clarity and incisiveness with which it has presented its position while blaming it for its form of argumentation and interpretation.

As an example of the latter, I have included the following footnote in a manuscript presently being drafted:

E. H. Carr, in *What Is History* (London 1962), stated, "first, that you cannot understand the work of the true historian unless you have first grasped the standpoint from which he himself approached it; secondly, that that standpoint is itself rooted in a social and historical background" (p. 34). This position has frequently been attacked for leading history astray into the sociology of knowledge. Most recently, Professor J. H. Hexter of Yale, in an article "Doing History" (COMMENTARY, June 1971), termed it "amateur seat-of-the-pants psychologizing," deeming it "less a vice than an unfortunate but inevitable consequence of raising the problem in the first place," with the added *ad hominem* that, "I know because I have had a try at the game myself" (p. 54).

After setting forth the prerequisites of professional historiography for comprehensiveness, coherence, and accuracy (all, incidentally, specified by Carr but unacknowledged by Hexter in his criticism), Hexter offers a more substantial criticism by citing one empirical case which he claims falsifies Carr's universal dictum. A historian examining the British history section of the library passes by Francis Aidan Cardinal Gasquet's sympathetic study *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* (1888) and Geoffrey Baskerville's sneering *English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries* (1937) to select the four massive and authoritative volumes of the late Professor D. D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* and *The Religious Orders in England*, indifferent to the fact that Knowles was a Catholic priest and a Benedictine monk.

The choice, however, is not between the Scylla of inevitably imposing the bias of the historical present on the past and the Charybdis of viewing the past from a divine perspective. If we inherently

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imposed our subjective perspective on the past, the point of obtaining authoritative answers and, hence, to asking questions, would be lost. If, on the other hand, there is an accepted authoritative interpretation, then there is also no point in raising a question about the interpretation since questions are only relevant if there is a basis for puzzlement. However, where two authoritative historians disagree in their assessment of the significance of the same events, then it is incumbent on the historian to relate those interpretations to the historical presumptions of the historians, for, in such cases, the examination of the presumptions a historian brings to his scholarship is part of the professional prerequisites of a historian.

Mr. Hexter, in his personal and patronizing asides to the radical historian Professor Lemisch, in his factual omissions with respect to Carr, and in his misuse of arguments, plays an analogous role in the philosophy of history to the amateurish, skeptical, and sneering Geoffrey Baskerville in the histor-

ical profession. In refusing honestly to acknowledge and deal with the crucial issues of the effect of a historian's framework on history, even as a historian (see, for example, Alice Gérard's recently published *La Révolution Française: Mythes et Interprétations 1789-1970*, which traces the changes in the authoritative historiographies of this key historical event), Mr. Hexter's liberal concern to establish principles that are eternally valid does little justice to his great skill as a historian and it also reveals the amateur quality of his excursion into the philosophy of history.

H. ADELMAN

York University
Downsview, Ontario

J. H. HEXTER writes:

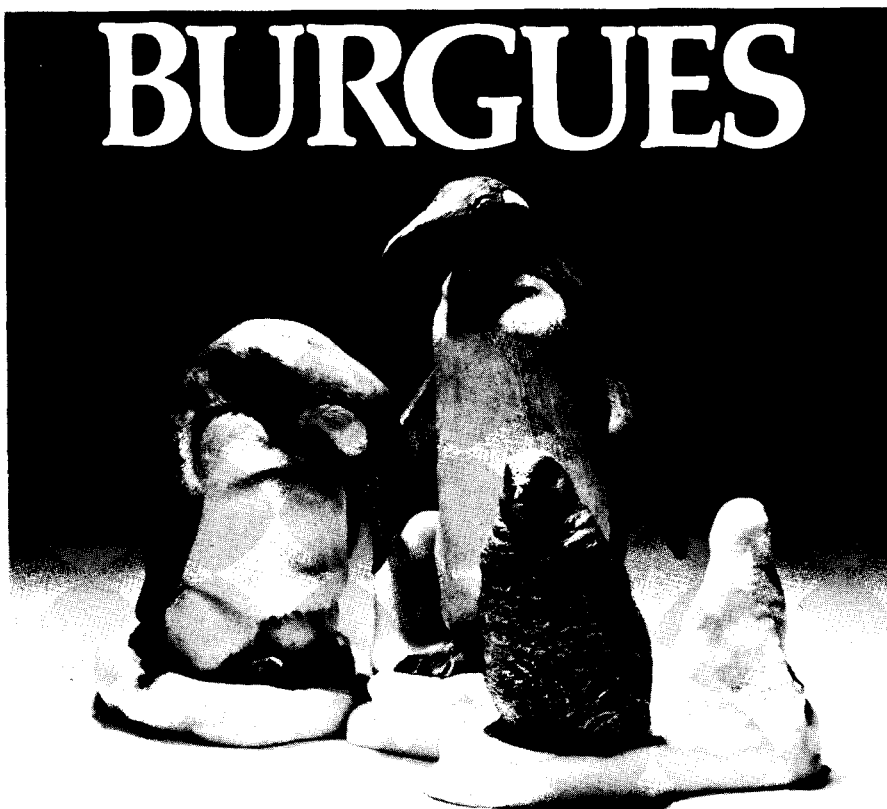
1) Between Mr. Kerson's evaluation and mine of the effectiveness of the society of historians in enforcing a just apportionment of academic rewards there is probably less difference in substance than in level of expectation. I think that often it works pretty well, and Mr. Kerson agrees. He thinks that sometimes it works pretty badly,

and I agree. In my own generation of historians, I have known of four who, past their forty-fifth years, were still patently being shafted. Although I was one of them, that does not seem to me to be many. I have long since scaled down my requirements and expectations of human institutions, and as merely human institutions go, the society of historians seems to do its work reasonably well. One may ascribe my moderately favorable view of an institution that for a good while did not do very well by me to the general wisdom of experience or to the mush-headedness of dotage. It is an open question.

2) Mr. Adelman got so much enjoyment out of castigating "the amateur quality" of my "excursion into the philosophy of history" that I would like to call to his attention *The History Primer* (Basic Books), in which I engage in a more extensive foray in the same direction. It will split his sides.

3) Either I do not understand Mr. Pollard, or, as seems to me more likely, he does not quite understand himself. I do not know what "relevant evidentiary questions" are, but in the relevant place both Mr. Lemisch and I were talking about questions concerning the quality of evidence adduced in support of declarative statements of facts about the past. For querying the adequacy of such evidence, the criteria of "slightness or abundance, dubiousness or trustworthiness" seem to me and to courts of law less trivial than they do to Mr. Pollard. On the other hand in this context, "conservative or radical" seems a criterion odd enough to require an exposition less opaque than the one Mr. Pollard provides.

What upsets me a little about the above letters is their failure to pay much heed to what I thought was the main thrust of my article. The point was *not* that historians make no use of their own experience in writing history. Since their own experience is the only one they have, what else can they use? I said this quite emphatically myself twenty years ago in "The Historian and His Day," and more recently and more emphatically in *The History Primer*. In "Doing History" the point of my argument was that whatever my experience and vision of life may be, I can *never* offer it in evidence before my peers as grounds for my allegations about what happened in a past in which I was not a participant. I can draw on my experience to help me under-



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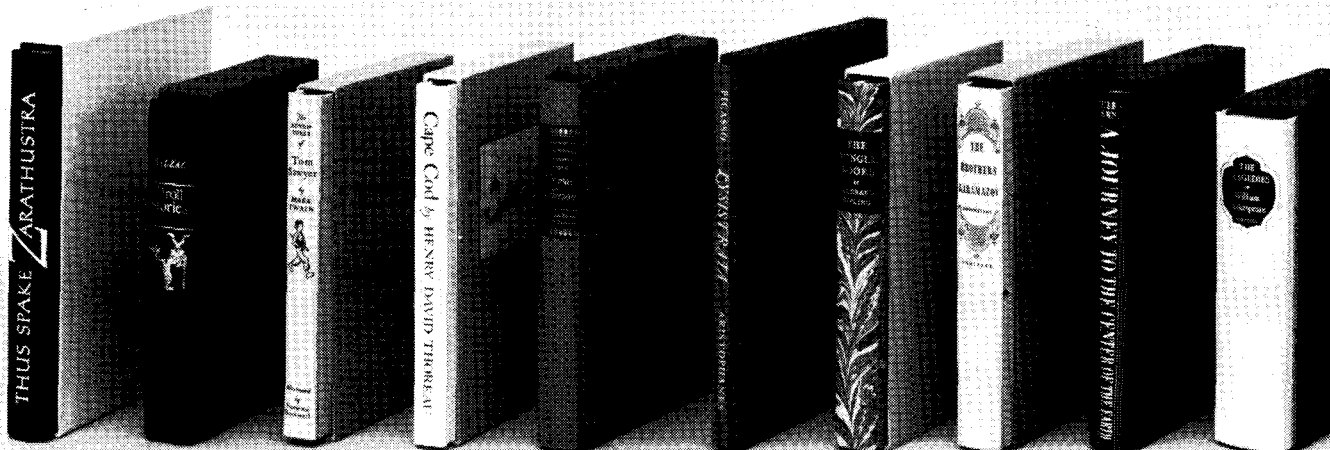
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stand the past, and indeed must, since I have nothing else to draw on. If, however, I cite my experience rather than the record of the past as validation for my assertions, my professional peers will quite rightly bar such evidence as incompetent, irrelevant, and immaterial. The brooding omnipresence of my peers both as an external reference group and as an internalized superego has not, I am sure, enabled me to "write history from a divine perspective" (Adelman). It has, however, insured that when I ride a historical hobby horse, I take care to have a whole posse of considered, well-organized evidence riding shotgun for me. Thus the pervasive intrusion into my activities of the society of historians has turned at least one congenital slob into a reasonably tidy historian and somewhat improved the history that I write from a strictly human perspective.

Given a cup four-fifths empty, persistently and only to ask, "Why is it empty?" is probably appropriate. When the cup is one-fifth empty, however, that question blocks out the alternate query,

"Why is it full?" Most people who have written about history in the past thirty years have been obsessed with the former question to the neglect of the latter. Since in my opinion the cup of history is about four-fifths full, in "Doing History" my inquiry into the operations of the society of historians which have kept it that way, was not an altogether idle exercise. This is particularly so since there is now no other exercise of the kind available. At any rate, I know of none.

One bit of that rather long footnote which Mr. Adelman dedicated to me gets right to the point of difference between all the letter writers and me. He says, "Where two authoritative historians disagree in their assessment of the significance of the same events, then it is incumbent on the historian to relate those interpretations to the historical presumptions of the historians, for, in such cases, the examination of the presumptions a historian brings to his scholarship is part of the professional prerequisites of a historian." Somehow, that does not seem right at

all. What Mr. Adelman demands of "the historian" it is proper to demand only of historiographers, practitioners in a legitimate, small, and currently overpopulated region of history. Sometimes examining the presumptions of another historian can be useful, particularly when it alerts readers to his involvement in a consistent pattern of aberration and error. In any case it is fun, since it invariably stings the victim into denying the existence or the relevance of the alleged presumptions. But it is hardly "incumbent on" all historians to engage in presumption-snooping. And surely when authorities disagree, it is not the most profitable activity for a historian to engage in. The ordinary prescription of his society to a historian confronted with divergent interpretations is to examine the evidence offered by the conflicting historians for accuracy, abundance, and trustworthiness, and the explanations for cogency and relevance. The prescription is sound; given the number of unresolved conflicts, however, no individual historian can follow it. Here again a prudent historian will rely on the help of other members of the society of professional historians, better equipped than he to deal with a conflict tangential to his pressing concerns. Surely this is preferable to overindulgence in amateur seat-of-the-pants psychologizing (or sociology-of-knowledgizing) to which Mr. Adelman thinks all historians should be addicted.

Let Mr. Adelman think I exaggerate the dangers of such psychologizing, let me indicate how my indulgence in it in "Doing History" and his readiness to indulge my indulgence got us into trouble. On the basis of internal evidence (in such matters nothing but internal evidence is initially relevant), I identified Geoffrey Baskerville as a skeptic of the 1930's. Mr. Adelman accepted my identification. Unfortunately, it was wrong. On July 22 Professor H. R. Trevor-Roper wrote me as follows:

Allow me to correct you on a point of detail. Geoffrey Baskerville was *not* a skeptic. He was a devout high Anglican. He once told me that he liked to think that no one could deduce his religious views from his historical writing. Which, of course, proves your point.

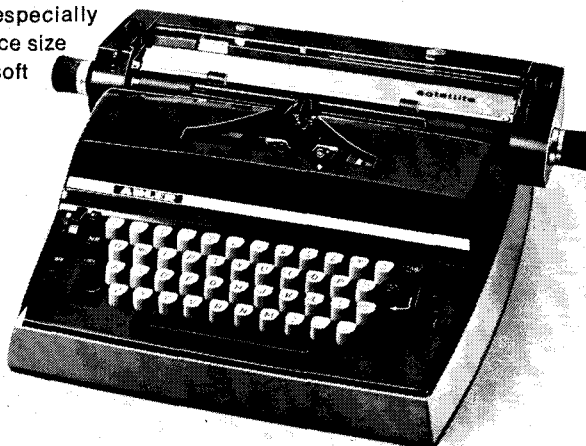
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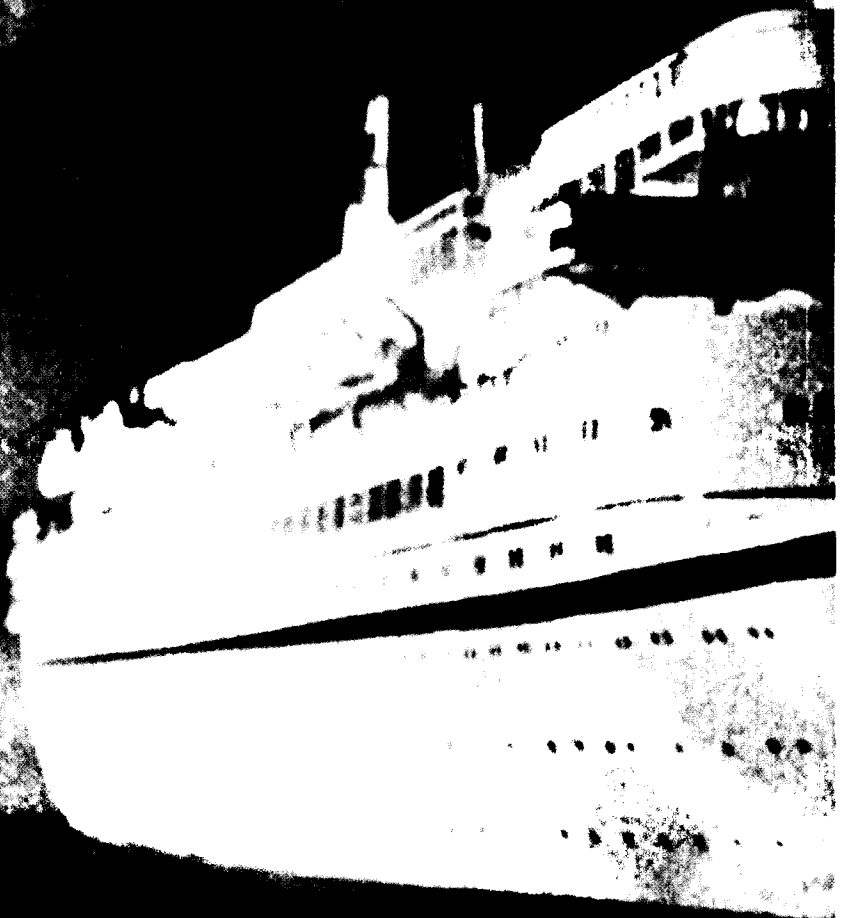
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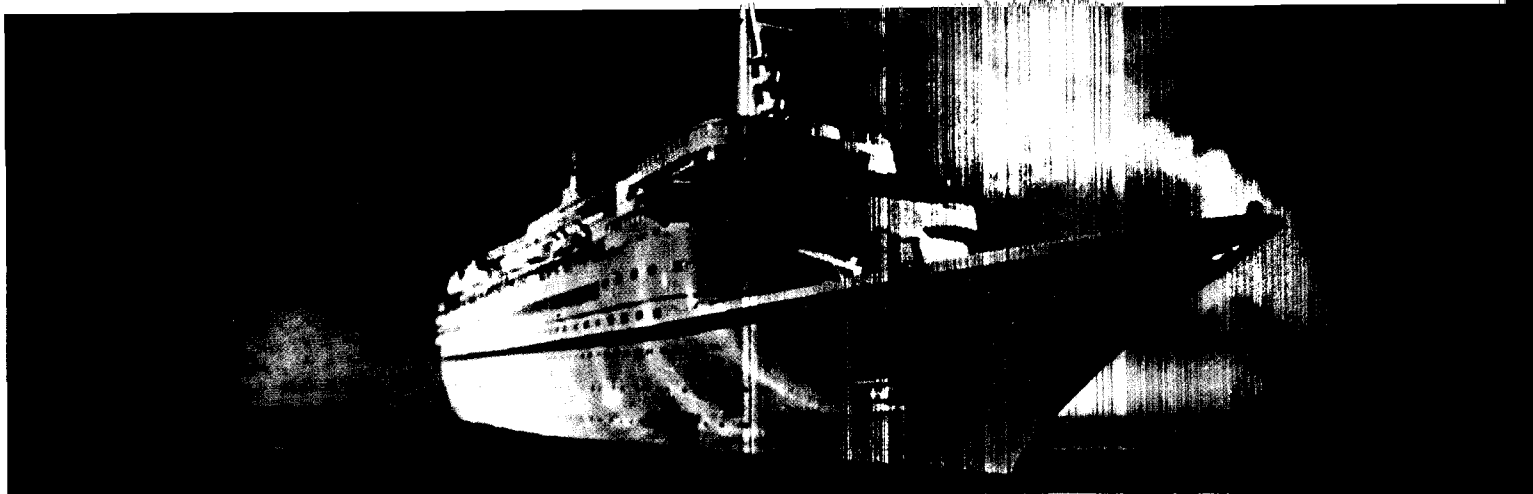
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my response to Professor Trevor-Roper:

The error is somewhat embarrassing. On the other hand it is agreeable to entertain general views so sound that they are confirmed by one's particular mistakes.

College Days

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

... As a Phi Ep I enjoyed reading Joseph Epstein's "Memoirs of a Fraternity Man" [July]. Through the similarities and differences between the Phi Epsilon Pi of the University of Illinois in the 1950's and the Phi Epsilon Pi of Northern Illinois University in the late 1960's there runs a common feeling of sadness at its passing from the scene forever.

When I first came to NIU in DeKalb (the barbed-wire capital of the world) in 1967, Phi Ep was at its zenith. The new Phi Ep house on Hillcrest Avenue was one of the biggest and plushiest on Greek row. The Phi Ep concept of itself as an elite brotherhood still corresponded, somewhat, to reality.

The decline of Phi Ep at NIU in the ensuing three years would make a nostalgic magazine article in itself. Multiply this by the total number of defunct Phi Ep chapters and the dismal story could fill a book.

At NIU Phi Ep, which was over half Jewish, and the local chapter of Zeta Beta Tau, which was almost entirely Jewish, folded within one semester of each other. There are no other Jewish national fraternities on our campus of 23,000 students.

The fraternity system is obviously withering away. With the deep changes that have come over campus mores in the last decade, this trend can certainly be expected to continue. Many of the reasons why today's college students reject the traditional fraternity system are valid. But I cannot say that I am really pleased to see many of our fine fraternities like Phi Epsilon Pi pass into the realm of distant memory.

NATHAN B. DAVENPORT
Phi Epsilon Pi
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

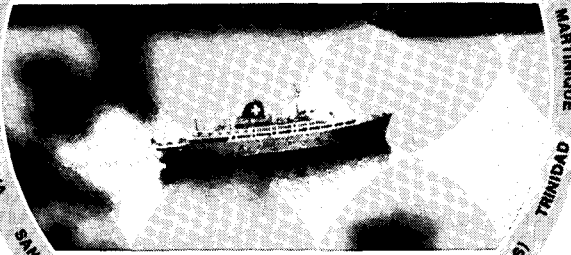
TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

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porary of Mr. Epstein's, who also would have preferred a more stimulating undergraduate environment than that of the "dismal twin-cities" of Champaign and Urbana, I can attest to the fact that there were numbers of independent students in the men's and women's dormitories who at that time, as their spiritual descendants do now, recognized the vacuity of Greek life, its lack of serious purpose, and the existence of social injustice and political irresponsibility in the world. Indeed these students fought against local segregated practices and sought in other ways to organize and arouse politically—alas, in vain—the generally lethargic student body. Perhaps Mr. Epstein would admit that not all of these independent students developed social consciences only as a result of personal inadequacies, financial limitations, or the discrimination practiced against them by fraternities. And some of them, it might surprise him to know, were even Jewish!

SALLY M. MILLER

University of the Pacific
Stockton, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I preceded Joseph Epstein by ten years at the University of Illinois. Although by some odd stroke of good luck I rejected overtures made to me to join a fraternity, I had relatively strong ties to several of the Jewish fraternities—I was a waiter in their dining rooms!

Two incidents stand out in my memory which illuminate both the awe with which members of the fraternity regarded the institution and the feelings of disdain (fear? superiority?) the adherents felt toward the "independents."

While waiting tables—in the Zeta Beta Tau, not the Phi Epsilon house—I was regarded with curiosity and wonder because, first, I was a graduate student, and second, I was a Jew, and Jews rarely served as waiters in Jewish fraternities. During Hell Week, I was sickened by the physical, mental, and moral abuse suffered by the pledges, and I tried to organize resistance to the activities. (This "good clean fun" sometimes resulted in the need for medical treatment.) I was amazed to find myself a leader without followers, and shocked to find that the victims actively opposed any interference with what was taken to be a sacred tradition. . . .

A second, and more humorous, incident: the same year, while serving as a waiter at a fraternity dance, I was led to an anteroom by the fraternity officers and house mother and admonished for fraternizing with a guest at the dance—my own sister! . . .

That today's student body is indifferent or hostile to the Greek letter system is just another sign that today's generation is a lot smarter than mine was. . . .

ROBERT J. SCHREIBER
Stamford, Connecticut

Intellectuals & Ethnics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is clearly churlish of me to find fault with Peter Berger's gracious review of my book, *Why Can't They Be Like Us?* [Books in Review, July], but then, Mr. Berger notes very accurately that I am Irish, and the Irish constitute an ethnic group that is widely believed, if indeed without statistical documentation, to enjoy arguing. And there is no better place in the United States to argue than in the Letters columns of COMMENTARY.

My arguments with Mr. Berger are twofold:

1) He thinks my chapter on "Intellectuals as an Ethnic Group" is tongue-in-cheek and should not be included in a "serious" book, but, in truth, that chapter is no less serious—and no more serious—than the rest of the book. Peter Berger himself suggests in a later paragraph that there are other collectivities besides nationality group in which a man can form "primordial" ties which, of course, is the important and very serious point of the chapter on intellectuals.

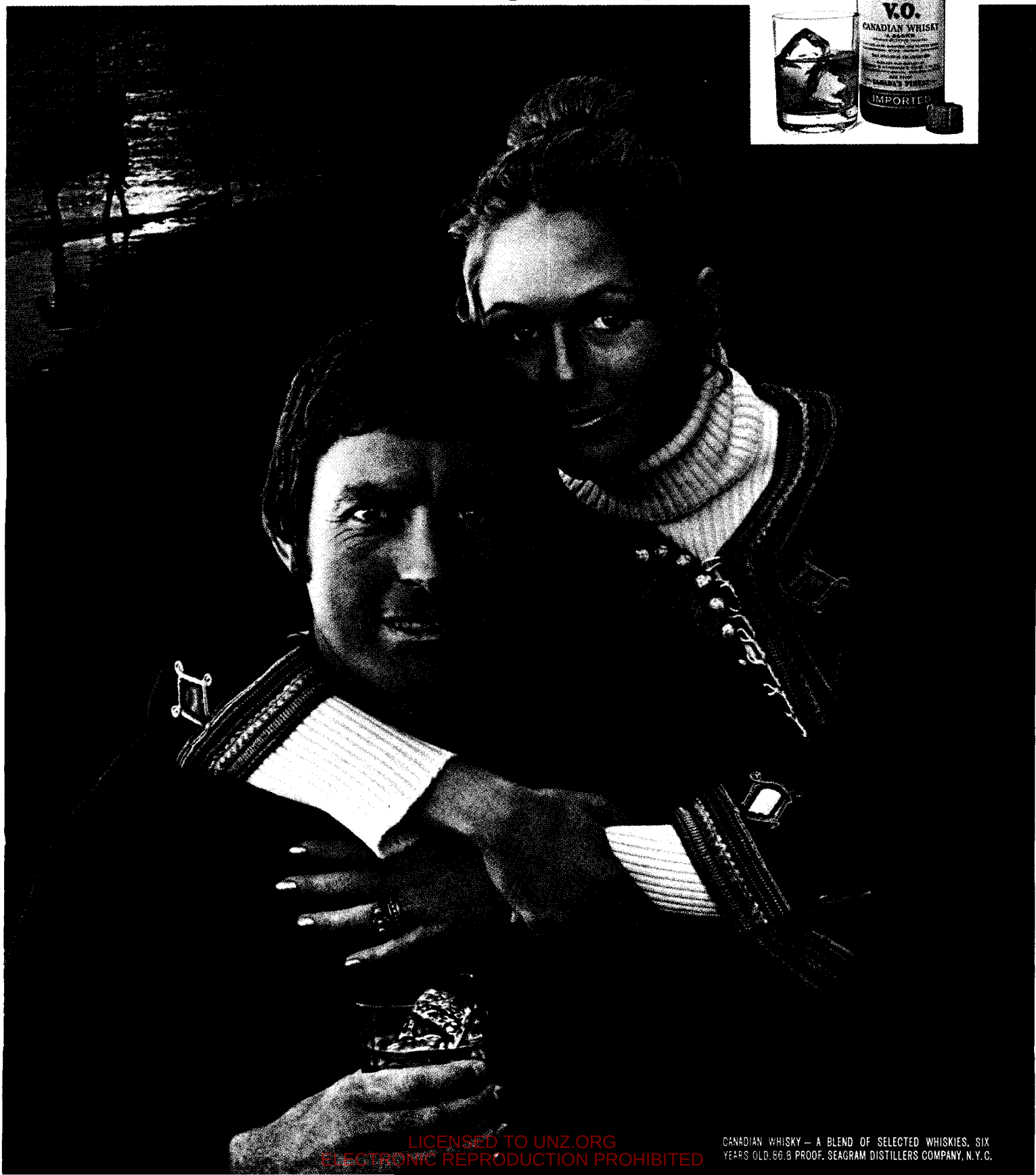
I was tempted to accuse Mr. Berger of taking a very square position (by which I mean a non-Irish position), that one cannot at the same time be dead serious and have tongue in cheek, but, as the author of "The Bluing of America," Mr. Berger must surely be aware that the humorous spoof is sometimes the most serious form of argumentation.

2) Mr. Berger is quite correct when he says that it is possible that certain American groups, like the blacks, might choose separation. However, I feel that Mr. Berger, like most other elite social commentators, does not distinguish between pluralism and separatism. The research evidence gathered by

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Angus Campbell and Howard Shuman at the University of Michigan in 1968 seems to demonstrate conclusively that the overwhelming majority of blacks are opting for pluralism and not separatism; that is to say, for the right to maintain their own distinctive cultural heritage as part of a larger American society. More recently, in the *American Journal of Sociology*, Paul Metzger has argued the same case on a more theoretical level, contending quite persuasively that most liberals and most social scientists have confused integration with assimilation.

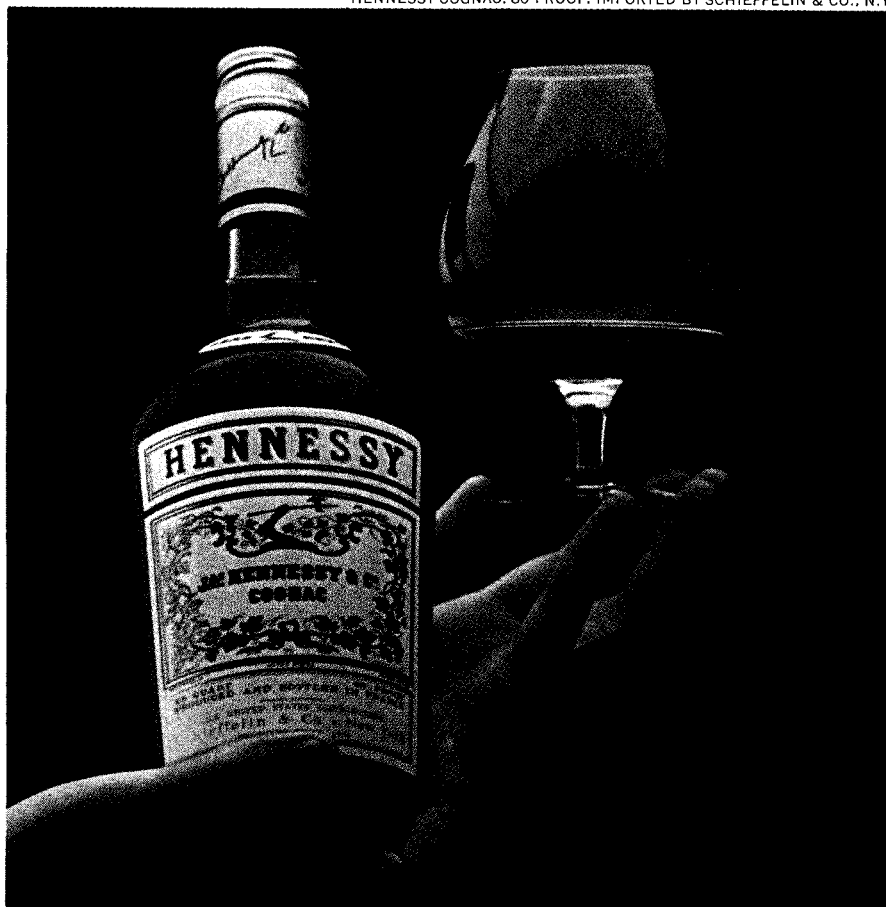
But there is a distinction between integration and assimilation and between pluralism and separatism. American society in theory has endorsed pluralism and integration without assimilation, but in fact, all the pressures of both elite social theory and official social practice have been toward assimilation. An exception has now been made for the blacks. The Poles and the Germans before them were

not allowed to maintain a distinctive pluralistic culture. Blacks are now being encouraged to develop their own distinctive heritage, but in both cases mainstream America persists in defining distinctiveness as separatism and in identifying integration with assimilation. Diversity, the argument seems to run, is bad and it really ought not to be tolerated except for certain groups to whom society has done intolerable injustice. But diversity is bad for everyone else because it means separatism and separatism means conflict. In fact, separatism may or may not mean conflict, but diversity does not mean separatism. It didn't for the Irish, the Germans, the Poles, or the Italians and it doesn't for the blacks either, though it may be a long time before elite America is able to grasp this truth.

ANDREW M. GREELEY

Director, Center for the Study of Pluralism
University of Chicago
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"A Certain Anxiety"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "A Certain Anxiety" [Issues, August] Norman Podhoretz remarks that "... in America we find publications of the ideological Right like *Alternative* warning against and deploring the growth of anti-Semitism, while publications of the Left like the *Village Voice* blithely go on expressing or apologizing for anti-Semitic sentiments and ideas." At one time, it might have been fair to characterize *The Alternative* as one of the "publications of the ideological Right," but as the Age of Aquarius continues to reveal its mysteries ... *The Alternative's* position is becoming less and less fixed.

The Alternative's writers, most of whom are students and young faculty members, now include people on the Left as well as the Right, liberals and conservatives, socialists and capitalists, not to mention the utterly uncategorizable. Today *The Alternative* does not demand ideological conformity of its writers (given the diversity and independence of its writers, *The Alternative* would not get such conformity even if it were to demand it). What *The Alternative* asks of its writers is intelligence, originality, and a sense of humor.

Although *The Alternative* often has been labeled a "conservative" or "right-wing" publication, it has attempted to uphold those liberal values—among them, democracy, freedom, tolerance, and civilized discourse—that many liberals have abandoned or, at least, failed to defend. Because it believes in those values, *The Alternative* will continue to expose and condemn anti-Semitism whenever it may appear and especially when it is advocated or condoned by people who claim to be working for "social justice," "liberation," or "a better world." Such people are charlatans and scoundrels of the worst sort.

R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.

TERRY M. KRIEGER

The Alternative
Bloomington, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

... I believe that those ... Jewish "leaders" who excoriate Jews for being concerned with Jewish matters, ... who proclaim to the world that the Jews "have it made" and should direct their attention to the

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community at large . . . are afflicted with a disease which causes great harm to the vast majority of Jews. There are so many non-sectarian organizations which concern themselves with community affairs that I am bewildered as to why these so-called "leaders" choose to join Jewish organizations and then proceed to pervert their essence. . . .

WALTER COHEN
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Norman Podhoretz's deeply-felt essay and can assure him that he is neither paranoid, reactionary, nor parochial.

First my credentials. I was born in America to parents who were Catholic, poor, Italian. I have been married for twenty-two years to the same woman. She is Jewish. We have two daughters, and I have more fear for them than even Mr. Podhoretz expressed. . . .

He is correct about anti-Semitism in the cultural field. I can speak for Italian-Americans, who, in private, say despicable things. They cannot understand that Italian-Americans do not support culture and so proceed to blame the Jews. . . .

As for black anti-Semitism, I saw plenty of that when I worked in the Department of Welfare. I could forgive the poor and disabled, but I have never forgiven staff members. They were all college graduates, and somehow when a person is educated you expect better of him. . . .

LUCAS LONGO
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I feel that "A Certain Anxiety" can serve as a rallying cry for all thoughtful Jews who truly believe in the pluralist liberal democracy which is America, and who are prepared to assert and defend Jewish rights, interests, and freedoms within the framework of that democracy.

I was particularly impressed by Norman Podhoretz's courage—as well as clarity of thought—in stating unequivocally that our *present* danger comes from the Left rather than from the Right.

The more serious critics of liberal thought have argued that the basic weakness of modern "liberalism" has been its unwillingness—and indeed its incapacity—to see danger from the Left while

always being very sensitive, often excessively so, about noting danger from the Right. . . .

JAY FRANKLIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The message of "A Certain Anxiety" is, if anything, overdue and I wonder why so many of our Jewish organizations . . . are unaware of the obvious danger to our people. They, as well as the intellectuals whom Norman Podhoretz mentions, are exacerbating our plight and our almost inevitable destiny in this great and tolerant country. A review of our tragic history would be a profitable and timely lesson to them.

CECILIA R. GISSEN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . What Norman Podhoretz says should have been shouted from the rooftops long ago. I think it was Charles Angoff who quoted his old boss, H. L. Mencken, that "The Jews shout when they should keep quiet and keep quiet when they should shout from the rooftops." . . .

EDWARD GINSBURG
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

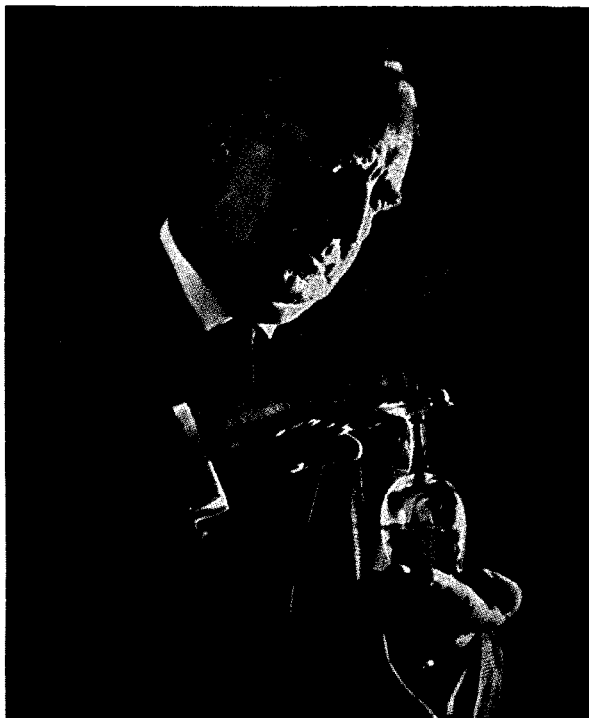
The Russian anti-Semites who attacked not Jews but "rootless cosmopolitans" have their enlightened counterparts among those who attack not Jews but "Zionists." . . .

WILLIAM MILLER
Roselle, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz expressed beautifully my own thoughts and fears. This country has been good to us—although there has been, and there still is, anti-Semitism here, it has not been of the virulent form and it has never been government-sponsored. . . . Nevertheless, I believe Israel is the only hope for all Jews. Had Israel existed in 1933, the one-third of our people who were murdered by the Germans, would, in my opinion, have lived. They died because Christian nations, including our own under Roosevelt, would not give them even temporary shelter. With few exceptions our 2,000-year-old history in Christian Europe has been one long experience of persecution and murder. . . . Thousands of years ago, a Jew said "If you are

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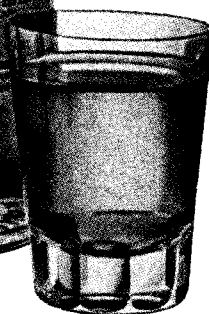
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not for yourself, then who will be for you; if not now, when?"

Mrs. R. KAHN
Jamaica, New York

Travel Writing

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Kathleen Nott must have suffered a long, hot summer in 1970, judging by her comments on Hong Kong ["East Is West?" July]. She found it "pleasant to cross to the mainland from Kowloon by ferry. . . ." and then went on to observe how there were "so many people rushing to and fro between Kowloon and the mainland. . . ."

Even traveling by simulator would not make Miss Nott's comments possible. . . . Perhaps she traveled by ferry from Kowloon, which is on the tip of the Chinese mainland, to the island of Hong Kong. There is no ferry service that I know of between Kowloon and the mainland.

Miss Nott is also adrift in regard to street lighting, which functions extremely well in the Colony. . . .

Miss Nott's inaccurate observations lead me to believe that travel writing should be done by experts and not mere writers. How can Miss Nott hope to answer the complicated question "East is West?" when she doesn't even know which way the double-ended ferry is going!

MALCOLM CAPLAN
Kowloon, Hong Kong

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I suppose that Kathleen Nott proves her point—that travel is not broadening. Yes, possibly, if you don't know where you are and to whom you are speaking. Kowloon is on the mainland, and you take the ferry to go to Hong Kong island. . . . Mr. Edward Seidensticker is not a Sinologist but a famous scholar of Japanese literature. Miss Nott might have been

expected to know that, for he has translated Kawabata who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968. He is known as "Sticker" to his American friends, not to the Chinese, of course. Miss Nott's opinions and interpretations are just as dubious as her facts. . . .

Year after year, decade after decade, I, like many interested in Asia and Asian affairs, have watched COMMENTARY, *Encounter*, and a host of other reliably intellectual magazines go their merry Eurocentric way. Then, on that rare occasion when some space is given to this part of the world, an article like "East Is West?" is printed. . . .

SOL SANDERS
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
Tokyo, Japan

KATHLEEN NOTT writes:

I must apologize to Messrs. Caplan and Sanders. Both complain that I referred to Hong Kong as

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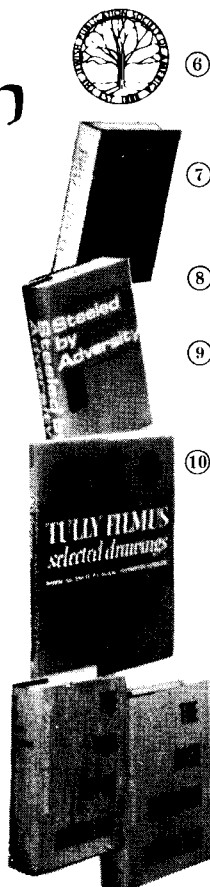
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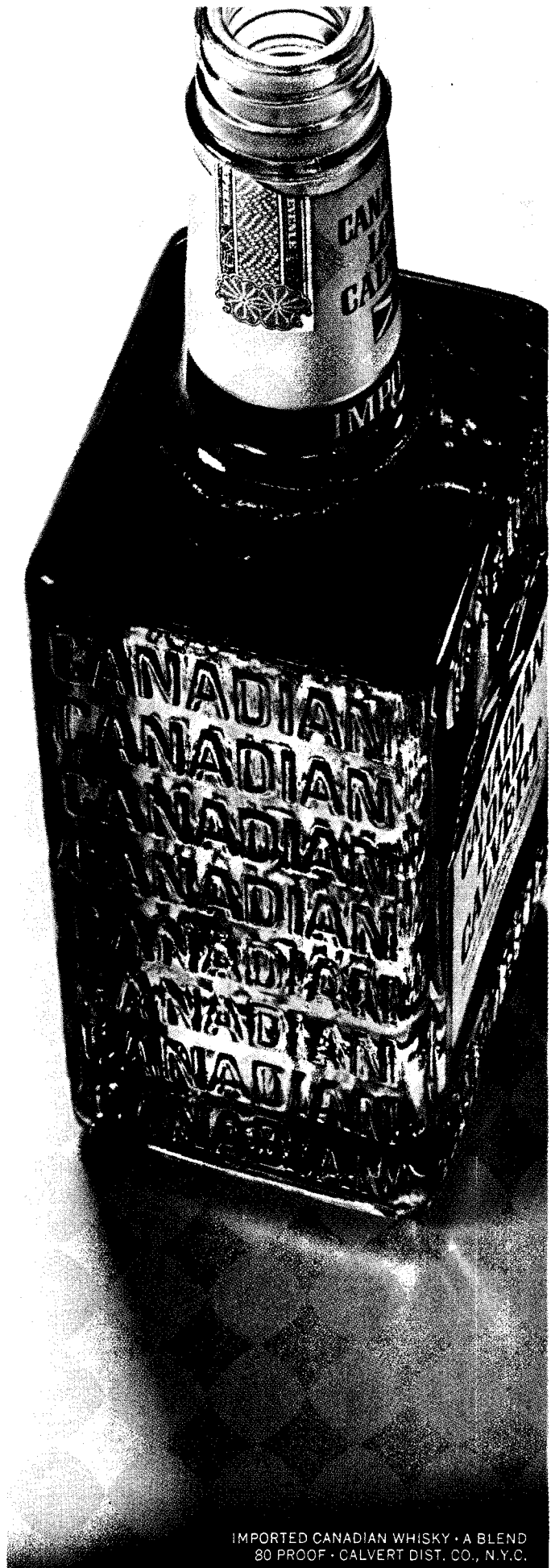
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the "mainland." This is very careless—it was actually a slip of the pen—I do know that Hong Kong is an island.

Mr. Caplan also complains that I said that the Hong Kong authorities economize on their street lighting and rely on their splendidly illuminated street signs. They did during the nights of my short visit. Still, I accept that in general they don't.

Mr. Sanders objects to my reference to Mr. Seidensticker as a Sinologist instead of an eminent

Japanese scholar. I do know he is an eminent Japanese scholar, having met and talked to him for some time in Tokyo. However, he does also know Chinese and kindly interpreted the "ideogram" to which I referred in my article when I met him again in Taiwan.

My article was meant to be impressionistic—is there no place for such a thing when the subject, as Mr. Sanders further complains, is, so he believes, insufficiently treated by your excellent periodical? It is sad that my impressions were some-

times too subjective. But the important subject of discussion was the Far Eastern political leaders and the extent to which their impressions of liberal democracy were accurate or deluded—and here I wasn't being "impressionistic" but was reporting what they said themselves. I think therefore that the main body of my article was not invalidated by these unfortunate slips in local observation and color.

In Appreciation

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I recall, some eight or nine years ago, reading an article concerning that strange breed of animal, the promising young playwright. Albee was the article's chief interest, I believe. However, the piece made mention of one Jack Richardson, whose properly severe picture lay couched between those of Gelber and Kopit. He was an ex-philosophy student turned playwright who was soon to have a play open on Broadway. I never did catch up with the short-lived *Lorenzo* but I did eventually read *Gallows Humor* and *The Prodigal*, two fine plays now seemingly lost to the ages. My interest was sparked and has never waned. I lost track of the man for a while till I viewed a pre-Broadway try-out of *Xmas in Las Vegas*. The play was all wrong and yet hinted at something that was so right. I waited for that something to arise but received only silence. Perhaps Mr. Richardson had had enough abuse and neglect. But then miraculously I had the pleasure of watching him pry his way into your magazine as a truly fine drama critic. At first he didn't seem to "belong," but now he fits and he is writing great things.

In actuality, this letter was written to praise his most recent article, "Ibsen's Nora and Ours" [July], an astute, witty, and finely-crafted piece of writing. I have never seen a letter in your pages commenting, either positively or negatively, upon this man's superior work. I have written so that Mr. Richardson knows someone has listened and is still doing so. He is giving us well-honed, insightful essays, and we should all be thankful for them. Let us not ignore him by some intellectual brand of benign neglect but rather let us praise him for the fine things he has afforded us—or perhaps we shall lose him forever.

ROBERT LEITER
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



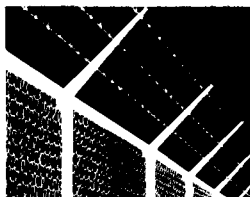
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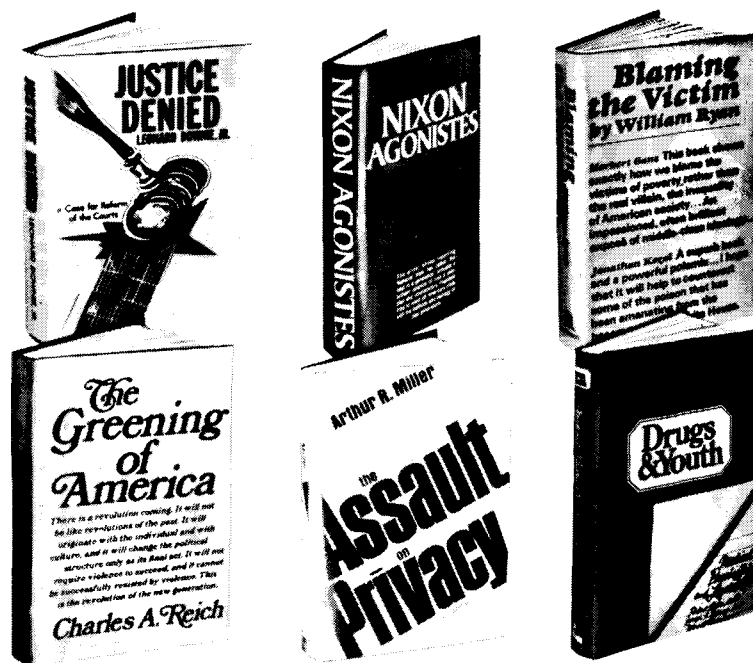
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A shameless plagiarism of *The Wild Bunch*, you might think (and it's really dispiriting, after Holden's performance in that film, to see how he has been encouraged to trade on facile charm in this), though the connoisseur will note a touch of *Butch Cassidy*, too, in its spinelessly pretty photography and the first part's labored cuteness. But if you think it can simply be dismissed as such, it's clear you're not a sophisticated moviegoer. For Blake Edwards, the writer and director of this thing, is not just, as you might think, another nonentity trying to cash in on someone else's success, but the object of a devoted following. Consult the film magazines and you will find solemn exegeses of his previous work, *Darling Lili*. Indeed, among Edwards's admirers, Sam Peckinpah, director of *The Wild Bunch* and principal victim of his theft, is liable to be held in peculiarly low repute. (Don't ask me why: address all queries to Andrew Sarris.) And though *Wild Rovers* seems to me in every respect, both compared with Peckinpah and taken on its own, wholly

pathetic (that is to say, a miserable failure judged even by its own low intentions), I doubt that, starting with the Sarris-acolytes already pumping it up into Edwards's latest masterpiece in the *Village Voice*, it will lack for enthusiasts to call me wrong.

And perhaps I am playing a tricky game in dismissing it. Probably, for the uninitiated, the very idea of taking films like *Darling Lili* or *Wild Rovers* seriously is worthy of ridicule; and yet there are films at least as disreputable on whose "seriousness" I'd want to insist. What makes Edwards (whom I don't like) a cult director, and Robert Siodmak or Vincente Minnelli (whom I do) not? (Of course, Minnelli is a cult director, in the sense of his having a cult following; that is, a following indiscriminately liking both his good films and his bad, and liking his good ones for the wrong reasons.) The basic proposition on which such cults are founded—that some directors without prestigious reputations and working in commercial genres lacking cultural esteem have produced work of great artistic merit—is one I wholeheartedly subscribe to. But it is one thing to point out that such work has been achieved in culturally disreputable circumstances despite the restrictions of commercial formulas; quite another to praise directors *because* of their being culturally disreputable and slickly commercial. (Often, the belittling of a Peckinpah seems merely the converse of this: he is dismissed as a prima-donna-ish maverick who gets himself fired; but the John Ford model of working within the system, however fruitful it has proved for Ford, simply doesn't apply to Peckinpah, and there's no reason why it

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should.) The cultists' adulation of an Edwards or a Preminger is rarely far from resembling literary people's advocacy of *Realpolitik*, from being a case of the aesthete's worship of power. "Professionalism" becomes the honorific quality for which an Edwards is admired; but the Hollywood film industry is one place where professionalism can be a dubious virtue, a place where professionalism and conformity all too easily merge. In Hollywood, to be a professional and not to be a John Ford is often to be, like Blake Edwards, an accomplished hack.

Nor will it help to explicate a *Darling Lili*, and discover in it Edwards's views on love, war, and the human condition; one can play this game with virtually any film of any director if one is sophist enough, and has the inclination. The cultists have been at work on this for years with the Ross Hunter productions (*Imitation of Life*, *Magnificent Obsession*, etc.) directed by Douglas Sirk, but, however little expositions of Sirkian philosophy will wash, one at least has in Sirk a director with a real talent for *mise en scène*; and, if his visual-decorative flair does not, in any sense, finally make silk purses out of sows' ears, it can at least provide pleasures while one watches the trash hauled by. But what of Edwards? I've seen most of Edwards's films, and enjoyed some: *Mr. Cory* is a nicely efficient young-man-on-the-make genre film, *The Perfect Furlough* and *Operation Petticoat* funny if machine-tooled comedies, and *High Time* a surprisingly amiable entertainment. With what should be a moody thriller in *Experiment in Terror*, however, Edwards's sleek glossiness becomes a decided liability, and the result has all the resonance of a dime dropped into plush pile carpeting in a soundproofed antechamber to the Vatican. And, increasingly, production values and the ethos of affluence become the *raison d'être*, and repetitions of successes the formula. *The Pink Panther* was funny; OK, we'll make *A Shot in the Dark* and milk it dry. Silent-comedy chases were funny; OK, we'll make the longest, most expensive silent-comedy-style chase ever (*The Great Chase*, naturally), and run that inspiration into

the ground. And for all you Julie Andrews fans, how about her apotheosis as *Darling Lili* (whoops, a bit of bad timing there!). Well, anyway, you remember how much you liked *Butch Cassidy* and *The Wild Bunch*. . . . Of course, the cultists and *auteur* critics are there, trading in subtleties the naked eye usually cannot see, to tell you that this is all philistine abuse of the director's art, but the fact is that film is supremely the art of the visible; in the movies, if you don't see something, chances are it isn't there.

IN MY piece in the September COMMENTARY ("Jules and Jack") I wrote in praise of *Drive, He Said* that it was the kind of work we probably need in our films now even more than we do a polished, perfected, self-contained masterpiece. I had no reason to believe then that, so very soon after, I would be seeing a film to put this proposition to the test. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* might not exactly be described as polished (it has been carefully contrived to look rough), nor is it really perfect, and probably it isn't even a masterpiece—but it is close enough to at least a suggestion of all these things to be the contrast to *Drive, He Said* I thought I was hypothesizing.

And, frankly, the idea that this might be so was one I resisted even before seeing the film, from the first laudatory word of it. However much I genuinely hope that each new film I see will be good, there was something inescapably annoying in having *Drive, He Said* surpassed within a week of my having committed myself to the opinion of its being the most exciting American film since *The Wild Bunch*. And Pauline Kael's claim that *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* "places Altman in the top rank of directors, right next to the great Europeans" was one I found putting-off in form as well as content. Even if I could bring myself to believe that the man who made *M*A*S*H* but two films before was now rubbing shoulders with Renoir (hardly credible to me despite my having seen from the perspective of *Brewster McCLOUD*, Altman's interim work, that *M*A*S*H* was more of a director's film than I'd originally

taken it for), the idea that it's necessary to raise the "European" standard in order to praise the artistry of American film-makers is one I reject on general principles as strangulating snobbery. Nor did my resistance to *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* end on my entering the theater. Unless there is some compelling artistic reason (that is, some reason other than disguising the age of the leading lady) to do otherwise, I think it is in the nature of the medium a reasonable expectation that what is on screen in a film always be brought sharply and clearly in sight, and the studied murkiness of the photography in the film's opening scenes left me feeling nothing so much as a strong urge to shout, "Focus!" Yet by the end of the film, I had come to accept even the look of it as beautiful, and its ability to bring one despite oneself to see the aesthetic rightness of an uncongenial visual style is probably as true an index as there is to the film's achievement. Even Warren Beatty, who has often filled me with a powerful desire to go out and catch a double feature during the course of his getting through a sentence, here seems finally close to being unimprovable.

In writing of *Drive, He Said*, I spoke of the difficulty of saying, in traditional thematic terms, what the film was about. There is a different but related difficulty in discussing *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, though what the film is about *thematically* is never less than clear. McCabe, a small-time gambler, drifts into the ramshackle, barely half-constructed mining town of Presbyterian Church on the Washington frontier, and sets up shop with his cards in the saloon. Recognizing the entrepreneurial possibilities offered by the town's almost exclusively male population, he soon imports a few unlovely prostitutes and establishes a rudimentary and mismanaged whorehouse in tents. Mrs. Miller, an ambitious, opium-smoking prostitute, gets wind of McCabe's activities, and offers to run the business much more profitably for him on condition that he invest in adding to its amenities. Though reluctant, he is persuaded, and closes the brothel for alterations to re-



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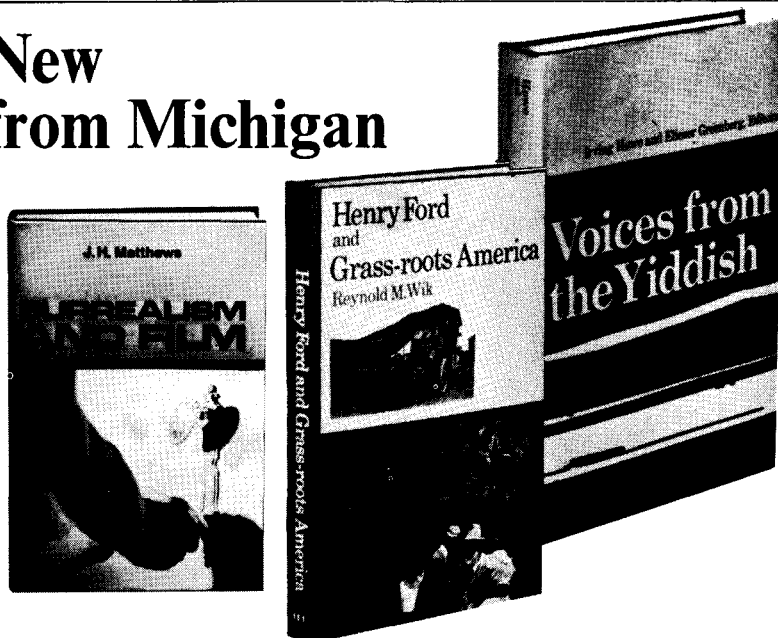
Before long, McCabe and Mrs. Miller have become the town's most prosperous citizens; so much so that he is visited one day by two representatives of a large mining company who offer to buy him out. Though McCabe declines their of-

fer cavalierly, Mrs. Miller prevails on him to take them, and the formidable purposefulness of the interests they represent, more seriously, and he resolves to settle with them the following morning. But the following morning they are gone, and soon after the town is visited by two very different agents of the mining company—a huge, menacing man clothed in furs, and his malevolent-looking, silent com-

panion—who claim to be in the area only for some hunting, but admit to being employed by the company in cases where its regular representatives have been unable to make a deal. McCabe offers to settle with the men, but their spokesman rebuffs his efforts with the incredulous, laughing declaration that *they* don't make deals. McCabe visits the town in which the company has its local offices, and confers there with a lawyer who eloquently promises to defend him without pay and make of his situation—the small businessman trying to stand up to the forces of monopolistic combination—a test-case of the rights of the enterprising individual. But McCabe returns home and the lawyer is not heard from again, and one day, as there was no doubt they would, the two killers, joined by a young tough from the town who attaches himself to them, come after him. With those among the townspeople who might have helped him distracted by a fire in the town's never-attended church, McCabe is left alone to face his stalkers, and though he succeeds in killing all three of them, he, too, is shot down and left helpless, to be buried by the thickly falling snow. Mrs. Miller, who had come to be involved with McCabe in a relationship at once tough and tender, sinks back into opium-pipe dreams.

THAT the themes of *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* are those of the little man devoured in the capitalist jungle, and of America, even on its mythically individualistic frontier, as the place in which this happens, will readily communicate itself, I trust, even from the foregoing synopsis; and many of the film's critics have taken the work at face value as simply this, a harsh depiction of cutthroat business dealings, acclaiming Altman's zealous naturalism for achieving the first portrayal in films of the American West as it really was. Yet more interesting than the film's themes themselves (and, in truth, they cannot really be called interesting) is the extent to which they and the film's meaning—that is to say, the actual quality of its impress on us—coexist but do not converge;

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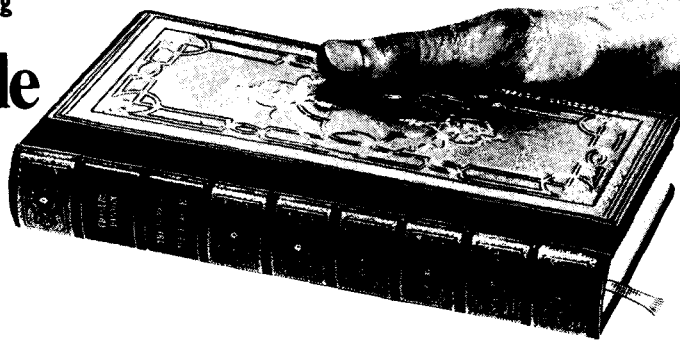
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even the work's naturalism—its meticulous devotion to the creation of a surface look of well-worn clothes and lived-in buildings as well as its much-noted emulation of real conversation's occasional inaudibility—can be seen ultimately to serve purposes beyond historical authenticity. Indeed, it might not be too much to say that *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is two films, the one culminating in the scene with the lawyer (which is surely the feeblest scene in the film), the other diffused throughout and constituting what one might call the film's secret life, a mysteriously pulsating life of nuances, reverberations, shifting textures. Were *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* merely a study of cutthroat business—were it, that is, reducible to its themes—one would expect the work of bitter irony which a synopsis suggests; but one's experience of the film, on the contrary, is that of idyllic sweetness, gentleness, and reverie. Thematically, the film may be about the grinding heel of corporate capitalism; expressively, at the heart of the work lies the construction of the brothel and bathhouse as a haven and refuge, an oasis of warmth and cleanliness sheltered from the inclement world that rages outside.

The sense of this is conveyed in images whose resonance has a power far beyond the simple ironies of the film's stated themes: images of the brothel girls and their patrons raptly watching the big metal discs slide into place in the house's newly-installed, primitive jukebox; of Mrs. Miller, smiling secretly to herself as she lies in bed and reads, moving her lips and tracing the lines with her finger (will we discover what she's reading? we wonder; we don't); of a solitary miner, dancing happily and abstractedly on ice to the amusement of some onlookers the night the two gunmen ride into town. Above all, what emerges is a sense of burgeoning community with the brothel at its center, a fugitive vision of community made all the more poignant for one's knowledge of how fragile the basis on which that community is sustained. The idyll is never so far out of touch with reality that McCabe doesn't continue to pay Mrs. Miller for her

favours, even after their emotional involvement, or that he can't visit her expectantly only to be told she's "got company." In the end, the oasis is ravaged not so much by conflicting business interests but, as personified in the gigantic, fur-clothed killer, by what seems an incursion of brute and elemental nature. In a sense, the most accurate paraphrase of the film might simply be: for a short time, the miners and whores of the town of Presbyterian Church lived together happily; then that time ended.

SEEN thus—less as a re-creation of the way it was than of a fleeting dream of how one wishes it to have been—the film's naturalism—the artfully cluttered interiors, the flow of movement and hum of conversation heard, half-heard, and almost overheard—imparts to it not so much verisimilitude as textural richness, weight, and density. Altman has spoken of his method of casting actors rather than extras for even his films' smallest roles in the hope that, staying with the film through the course of its shooting, they will establish some kind of rounded identity for themselves in even the briefest of background appearances and perhaps it is owing to this that *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, like *M*A*S*H* before it, seems so thoroughly peopled a work, so teeming with activity even at its edges. And the place these people inhabit in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, a town constructed for the film and actually lived in by the actors, has a solid existence in space as three-dimensional and topographically detailed as that of any other Western town I've seen in films before, perhaps only those in *My Darling Clementine* and *Shane* equaling its vividness as a physical creation. These best things in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*—the sense of place, fullness of detail, and loving evocation of communal happiness—are so fine that one may be tempted to claim that they are the film rather than the sensuous subtext of a work of thin ironies about entrepreneurship and the American myth of free enterprise (with its cluster of related ironies, as when a woman whose husband is killed in a fight when she is mistaken by another man for one of

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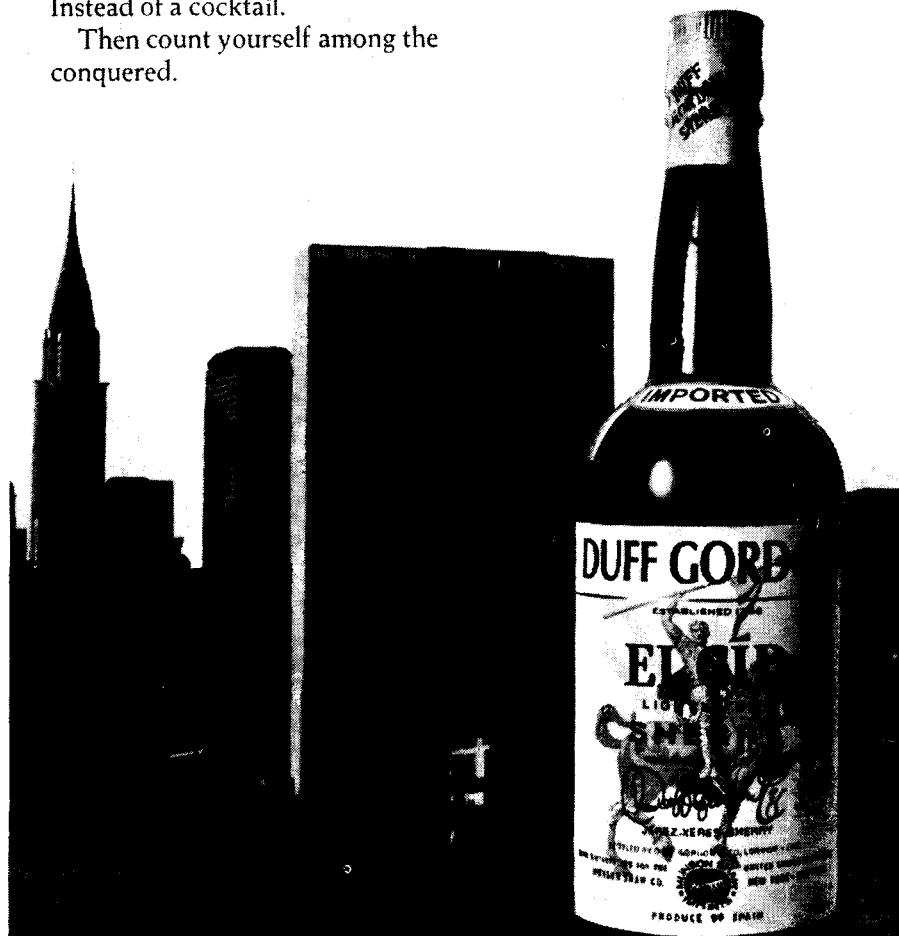
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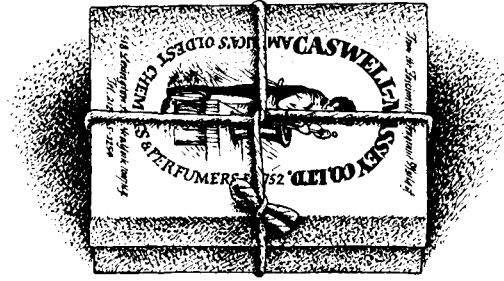
the whores ends up working in the brothel, and the like). And it would be equally mistaken, I believe, to assume that the film's director (who speaks in one interview of the particular significance of the lawyer's line, "until people stop dying for freedom we won't be free," and has elsewhere described a similarly sententious line in *M*A*S*H* as the "key to the philosophy" of that film) really quite understands, for all his technical audacity and stylistic command, what he has created.

I don't suggest this lack of consciousness makes the creation any less his—only that it throws into question the idea of Altman as a film-maker on the order of the great European masters, and perhaps, given that an Altman cult now threatens (however different in make-up from the Blake Edwards following), throws into question also the idea of the cult of the director in general. Probably, more than any other medium, film has an autonomous life of its own; a life of sensuousness and suggestiveness overflowing all those thematic molds within which film-makers may think to contain it. It sometimes seems that there have been no more than a handful of directors truly capable of making films whose range of meaning can be seen to be wholly encompassed by an artist's vision and imagination; films, that is, which can be said to be wholly achieved artistic creations rather than the mongrel offspring of a bastard medium; an achievement of this sort might indeed demand comparison with the great European masters if one is thinking of Buñuel or Renoir (or the great Americans if one is thinking of Chaplin and Keaton). A film such as *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* seems rather to consist of a small work well under its director's control and a larger one engaging materials that have not been fully worked out or artistically controlled but which nevertheless command a greater imaginative power than those things in the work which have: materials involving the creation of a small, idealized community set apart from society at large, and the association of this with a curious sexual innocence to be found behind the film's

bawdy façade, elements of which things one can see in *M*A*S*H* and *Brewster McCloud* as well.

YET finally more interesting than any analysis of these specific materials themselves, or of the degree of consciousness and intentionality in their handling, is the very fact that *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* does achieve a richness and meaningfulness greater than anything its articulated themes might have seemed to allow. Robert Warshow has written that "no film ever quite disappears into abstraction," but it is probably true, and true because of the deep affective power of film images, that no film ever wholly resists a pull toward abstraction either. Despite the ability of films to seem simply to be physically and neutrally *there*, there is, I think, an even greater drift of the medium toward the accretion of meaning, however different from intended meaning where this lacks power; toward an incarnation of values even in images, like those of *Marienbad*, aspiring to exclude all significance. Though there are moments in films that attain a virtually self-sufficient fullness of painterly beauty (like the shot of Rod Taylor at his desk with the American flag flapping in the background in *Zabriskie Point*) or luxuriant sensuousness (like the tango in *The Conformist*), even these seem finally to partake of that "hum and buzz of implication" (in Lionel Trilling's phrase) in which the life of fiction resides. If, at its weakest, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* serves to remind one that, in trying to get at what (and how) a film means in the largest sense, the explication of themes and of the art of the director may be only a part, the film at its best is also good enough to demonstrate that works of art, and films when they are works of art, can never wholly be made to yield themselves to any critical explication—that they are never *equatable* with their meaning even in that term's largest sense. Somewhere amid the play between abstraction and concreteness, between the expression of meaning and communication of a purely sensuous delight, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* has its sometimes flickering but luminous life.

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Norman Gall

You call yourself, if I am not mistaken, a revolutionist. But you err in holding that future revolutions will issue in freedom. In the past five hundred years, the principle of freedom has outlived its usefulness. An educational system which still conceives itself as a child of the age of enlightenment, with criticism as its chosen medium of instruction, the liberation and cult of the ego, the solvent forms of life which are absolutely fixed—such a system may still, for a time, reap an empty rhetorical advantage; but its reactionary character is, to the initiated, clearly beyond any doubt. All educational organizations worthy of the name have always recognized what must be the ultimate and significant principle of pedagogy: namely the absolute mandate, the iron bond, discipline, sacrifice, the renunciation of the ego, the curbing of the personality. And lastly, it is an unloving miscomprehension of youth to believe that it finds pleasure in freedom: its deepest pleasure lies in obedience. . . . Liberation and development of the individual are not the key to our age, they are not what our age demands. What it needs, what it wrestles after, what it will create—is Terror.

—Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

I

A SPANISH colonial governor of Cuba once said, in the midst of a series of 19th-century slave revolts, that the island could be easily governed *con un violin y un gallo*: with a fiddle and a fighting cock. No Cuban ruler of the past century has borne out this old aphorism more fully than Fidel Castro Ruz—Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government, First Secretary of the Cuban Communist party, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and President of INRA (*Instituto Nacional de la Reforma Agraria*). For the past thirteen years Fidel Castro, with his genius for propaganda and psychological reward, has dominated his island and conducted its diplomacy with the art and authority of a Renaissance prince, while leading his countrymen through the most drastic social revolution Latin America has seen in this century. At the age of

forty-four Castro has more seniority in power than any major world figure except Tito, Franco, and Mao Tse-tung (all now approaching eighty) and has confirmed the old rule of Caribbean politics that these islands are small enough to be kept in the pocket of a shrewd and tenacious dictator for a very long time. No dictator within memory has combined Fidel Castro's prodigious personal powers: great physical stamina and audacity; a memory of near-total recall; an amazing virtuosity at intrigue and maneuver; an imposing platform presence and an overpowering oratorical style drawing with equal effectiveness on comic and sentimental histrionics. These gifts have enabled Fidel Castro to obtain great sacrifices from the Cuban people while retaining a degree of popularity that has been extremely rare among Latin American governments of comparable longevity. Indeed, it is hard to see how the Cuban Revolution could have survived at all under the leadership of a lesser man. The reach of Fidel's powers of persuasion is shown in this account by the French agronomist René Dumont from his otherwise critical book, *Cuba: Est-Il Socialiste?* ("Cuba: Is It Socialist?"):¹

During the first few days I was in Cuba in late June 1969, I believed that an imminent transition to a Communism without marked privations was feasible. I did continue to register very explicit reservations about the projected 15 per cent annual increase in agricultural products, which was to be spread over a 12-year period. Yet in the course of the six-and-a-half-hour tour I made with Fidel Castro . . . his assurances were rather convincing. . . . With Fidel I had the impression of visiting the island guided by its proprietor, who was showing me his fields and pastures and cattle, if not also his men.

Dumont's *Cuba: Est-Il Socialiste?*, written by a veteran French Marxist with an international reputation as an expert in tropical agriculture,²

¹ Editions de Seuil, Paris. No English translation of this book has yet appeared, but excerpts were published in the September 1970 issue of *Dissent*.

² Dumont's writings on tropical agriculture go back nearly four decades to his first book (1935) on rice culture in the Tonkin delta. His books in English translations are: *False Start in Africa* (Praeger), *Cuba: Socialism and Development* (Grove Press), and *Lands Alive* (Monthly Review Press).

NORMAN GALL, whose most recent article in COMMENTARY was "Latin America: The Church Militant" (April 1970), is now an associate of the American Universities Field Staff in Latin America.

is one of three major books on Cuba to appear recently which, taken together, constitute an important political event that has seriously undermined what might be called the literary reputation of the Cuban Revolution. The two other books are Hugh Thomas's great history of Cuba from the British capture of Havana in 1762 to the October missile crisis two hundred years later,³ and K. S. Karol's *Guerrillas in Power: The Course of the Cuban Revolution*,⁴ a disillusioned left-wing critique of the Castro regime by an uprooted Polish Marxist who writes in French and worships at the throne of Mao Tse-tung.

The impact of these books helps to explain Fidel Castro's furious quarrel earlier this year with a large group of intellectuals in Paris and New York, including several Latin Americans residing abroad, who in effect withdrew their long-standing support for the regime in protest against the arrest of the poet Heberto Padilla and his subsequent "confession" of guilt for having made false and deprecatory statements about the Revolution to foreigners (among them Karol and Dumont, both of whom have been branded as CIA agents by the Castro regime). It might seem strange that people who in their past fervor for the Cuban Revolution were generously willing to overlook the fact that Castro was, by his own admission, holding 20,000 political prisoners,⁵ would now march like penguins in the opposite direction because of the arrest of a single poet (who "confessed" after only a month, placing his wife and his best friends in the dock, while others like the guerrilla *comandante* Hubert Matos and the labor leader David Salvador have spent more than a decade in prison without accepting "re-education"). It might also seem that the loss of some of these people to the Cuban revolutionary cause is a slight loss indeed; for example, Jean-Paul Sartre's uncritical enthusiasm after a few weeks' visit to Cuba in 1960 was at best very premature and evoked a Voltairean image of Dr. Pangloss in the tropics. Nevertheless the Padilla case did point to something greater than itself. What it pointed to was the destruction of even the limited degree of freedom of discussion and criticism which Castro had once seemed to accept and the complete and open rupture this entailed with the Western intellectual tradition.

Until these literary-political events occurred, the Cuban Revolution had been winning more and more admiration for its feat of survival in a hostile sea and for its announced intention of creating an agrarian socialism that would realize the Guevarist ideal of a "New Man" free of egoism and avarice and joyfully dedicated to laboring for the common good. However fanciful these intentions may have been, they were given a certain plausibility by the heightened tenor of public life in Cuba as compared with the gangsterism and corruption of previous decades. Moreover, despite recurrent economic failures, the Castro re-

gime had delivered two dramatic and immediate benefits to the poorest Cubans—education and full employment—while providing more pervasive and sophisticated attention to the peasantry than that class enjoys in any other country of the region.

BEFORE the Revolution, the ethnographer Fernando Ortiz wrote in his classic *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*:

A large part of the working class of Cuba has to live all year on the wages earned during two or three months, and the whole lower class suffers from this seasonal work system, being reduced to a state of poverty with an inadequate, vitamin-deficient diet consisting principally of rice, beans, and tubers, which leave it undernourished and the ready prey of hookworm, tuberculosis, malaria, and other diseases.

This contrasts dramatically with the description of the Argentine-born journalist Carlos Widmann⁶ of his visit to a sugar mill in Oriente Province on the eve of the 1970 harvest:

From the commercial point of view, the Revolution is bad business. In the 1950's production costs per pound of sugar were between 3.8 and four cents. Since the Revolution the cost of Cuban sugar has more than doubled. Above the noise of the Urbino Noris mill in Oriente, a young and good-natured foreman explained the situation to me: Before Castro, 960 mill laborers worked here three or four months per year at \$3.85 daily; in the nearby town there was just one doctor and a private school for the children of white-collar employees and a few year-round laborers. Today 1,200 men work in the mill all year at \$5.20 per day, and have free lunches, housing and schools for their children. Now there are eight doctors, and all the children go to school. It is easy to calculate that the production costs at the mill have doubled at least only through salary increases and giving the men year-round work. Production, meanwhile, has declined at the mill from 7,000 tons per day in 1957 to 6,500 now. "But on the other hand, we have doubled the capacity of our machinery," the radiant foreman added. "Next year we will produce 15,000 tons daily." Let God hear his words. In all of Cuba's 152 sugar mills the situation is the same.

But God did not hear his words, and this was the scene of economic disintegration in Cuba described by Fidel Castro in his "self-critical" speech of July 26, 1970:

Industrial goods pile up in the provincial warehouse of the Ministry of Domestic Trade in Havana. The plan for transportation of raw

³ Cuba: *The Pursuit of Freedom*, Harper & Row, 1696 pp., \$20.00.

⁴ Hill & Wang, 624 pp., \$12.50.

⁵ See the interview with Castro in Lee Lockwood, *Fidel's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel* (Macmillan, 1967), p. 205.

⁶ *Report aus Cuba* (Munich, 1970).

materials used for soaps and detergents, as well as the finished product, was not fulfilled. The transportation of silica sand for the production of cement and bottles, the transportation of steel bars, the transportation of fodder for the animals on state farms and the transportation of bagasse for the paper factories in Las Villas were insufficient. There was a work stoppage in the nail factory in Santiago de Cuba due to a lack in the transportation of raw materials; and the national fertilizer production plan was not met because of low extraction of the finished product. There was a 36 per cent drop in the number of railroad passengers, compared with 1969 in the January-May period, caused by the transfer of locomotives to the sugar harvest and the withdrawal of coaches from circulation due to lack of spare parts. . . . Our enemies are jubilant and base their hopes on our problems. We said they were right in this, that, and the other. They are only wrong in one point: in thinking that the people have other alternatives than the Revolution; in thinking that the people, seeing the difficulties of the Revolution . . . would choose the road of counterrevolution. [Shouts of "No!"] That is where they go wrong! That is where nobody will concede them the slightest grain of truth! That is their mistake!

Dumont's book is full of sad spectacles, viewed through a specialist's eye, like that in the Cauto Valley of Oriente where "some hundreds of hectares of banana tress were dying because they had been planted in a much too wet locale with very poor drainage. Any ordinary peasant would have avoided this gross mistake; in a state enterprise that justifies its existence only on the grounds of its technical superiority, such an error is inadmissible." Later on he writes:

The Castro regime first eliminated a capitalist agricultural system that had many defects—both men and land were underemployed—but was quite efficiently organized. The new socialist agriculture, of cooperatives and state farms, mobilized all available resources and was mechanized, even overmechanized, but it could not develop the same abilities for organizing work. Its failure is implicitly recognized in the present reorientation—the Special Plans⁷. . . .

⁷ The Special Plans are the pet projects of Castro and his closest associates. Albán Lataste, a Chilean who spent six years in Cuba and rose to Vice-Minister of the Central Planning Agency, says the Special Plans "tend to place the party in the role of being directly responsible for operational economic administration, displacing the regular organs of the state." While other ruling Communist parties confine themselves to a leading role of "political orientation, coordination, and control," the idea in Cuba "is to eliminate the separation between government and party, so the latter becomes the government itself." The Special Plans "follow budgetary methods, but without subjecting themselves to budgetary discipline like other state enterprises," thus diluting the scarce resources allotted to regular economic operations. (Cuba: *Hacia Una Nueva Economía Política del Socialismo?*—"Cuba: Toward a New Socialist Political Economy?")

A PART from analyzing the familiar but surprisingly persistent economic failures, the three books by Thomas, Dumont, and Karol agree on two important conclusions: that Cuban society has been increasingly militarized, and that one-man rule has had a destructive impact on all efforts to develop civilian institutions that would consolidate a Marxist "dictatorship of the proletariat." Indeed, with each passing year Cuba appears less a socialist republic than a classic Latin American military dictatorship with Marxist-Leninist trappings. To the extent that a large portion of the Cuban people still support the Revolution, their loyalty is not to the system but to Fidel. After thirteen years in power, Fidel's governing style is still that of the *guerrillero*: he maintains no office and is constantly in hiding or on the run, with only a few intimates knowing his whereabouts at any given time and with no need to account to anyone. According to Karol, "most ministers have adopted Fidel's peripatetic style of life, so that it is extremely difficult to catch any of them in their offices." Political power remains so personalized that the ten-year-old Cuban socialist state is still without a constitution and its Communist party has still to hold its first congress, which was announced for 1967 and then mysteriously cancelled. The "party" is really Castro and his train of courtiers, most of whom hold party and government posts simultaneously.

Thomas calls Cuba's 200,000-man armed force "by far the largest military undertaking in Latin America." Both the party and the economy have been so militarized that most of the hundred members of the party's central committee are military officers, while the army's increasingly prominent role in the economy has made it responsible for the bulk of mechanized agriculture. In the cabinet shift that followed the failure of the "Ten-Million-Ton" harvest of 1970—only 8.5 million tons were produced, at the cost of great hardship and dislocation—an army officer was named Minister of Education. Following the Padilla affair earlier this year, another army officer, from the political section of the Defense Ministry—who was editor of the magazine which made the first major attack on Padilla—was named head of the National Culture Council. Dumont writes of

a takeover by the army of a faltering socialized agriculture, for the army directs all motorized activities. . . . As of March-April 1969, the men in charge of the machinery on the state farms were replaced by lieutenants and the militarized tractor drivers were assigned fixed wages (thereby eliminating overtime pay), military schedules, 25 days of continuous work with no Sundays off, and a five-day leave once a month—work permitting. . . . Militarization was pushed forward to cope with the general disorder, such as the passive resistance of a growing percentage of unwilling workers. The Cuban people were made increasingly subservient to the party and the army, and it was

becoming more and more difficult to distinguish between the two inasmuch as both groups wore uniforms and carried revolvers.

As a journalist who has just completed his first decade of reporting from Latin America, I have read Thomas, Dumont, and Karol with apprehension and dismay. If the bleak picture they draw, writing from three distinct points of view, is as accurate in its general outlines as I think it is—and as both the internal evidence of Castro's own speeches and the testimony of such other writers of Marxist persuasion as Albán Lataste and Michel Gutelman⁸ seems to suggest it is—then the rest of the hemisphere will once again have to suffer a loss of hope in the possibility of a revolutionary solution to its terrible social and political problems and may have to confront, as a general condition, the recurrent and expanding counterrevolutionary terror and violence that have been appearing in Latin America during the past few years.⁹

II

WHATEVER the long-range factors, the immediate cause of the crisis in Cuba was the *zafra* (sugar harvest) of 1970, with its goal of ten million tons. The Ten-Million-Ton *zafra* involved the most dramatic and important political mobilization in Cuba since the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. But this fevered mobilization in 1970 had a rather lyric and speculative quality, like that of the long-delayed movement for Cuban national independence that began a century ago as Cuba was becoming thoroughly integrated into the U.S. economy. And the same quality could be found in the boom-and-bust sugar cycles which were the only gamble possible in a one-crop economy that was always in debt to its foreign suppliers, whether of slaves or of machinery, when the sugar industry was not owned outright by foreigners. Of these cycles Thomas writes:

The sugar production of Cuba between 1850 and 1925 mounted by an average of 8 per cent a year, even though the country had suffered two serious civil wars, one of them ruinous. This advance could be maintained if the world's buying power increased; and it did not. Hence the origin of a whole series of fantasies which Fidel Castro, Cuba's first international political figure, would eventually satisfy.

Emerging as a national goal after the failure of Che Guevara's Bolivian expedition to replace the receding goal of continental revolution as Cuba's great political objective, the Ten-Million-Ton *zafra* represented, in Castro's words, "far more than tons of sugar, far more than an economic victory; it is a test, a moral commitment for the country. And precisely because it is a test and a moral commitment we cannot fall short by even

a single gram of these ten millions. . . ." To maximize the accumulation of sugar for the great harvest, cutting and grinding for 1970 actually began in July, then was suspended a few weeks later to start again in October, a most unusual procedure on an island whose traditional *zafra* season is in the dry months from January to April.¹⁰ Throughout Cuba, men were summoned to battle in the canefields as if the country were at war. Before sunrise each day hundreds of thousands of men and women with machetes filed quietly along country roads strewn with wasted scraps of cane that filled the air with a pungent molasses-sweetness. Beneath the towering chimneys of the great sugar mills, built by the Americans but now renamed for revolutionary heroes, the engines ground day and night like great magnets polarizing all the energies of people in towns and fields for miles around. Huge trucks moved slowly like elephants in tandem along the fringes of the fields, dropping off students, office workers, prisoners, and soldiers to cut cane among the great phalanxes of uncut stalks, and picking up the cut stalks to deliver them to the mills. Throughout Cuba, at mills and schools and government ministries and army barracks, signs and posters proliferated bearing this simple legend: *Palabra de cubano: van: los diez millones de toneladas van* ("A Cuban's word: they're coming: the ten million tons are coming").

The urge to maximize sugar production becomes understandable if we look back to a 1955 study in which the Cuban National Bank estimated that to give the Cuban people in 1965 the standard of living attained in 1947 a sugar crop of more than nine million tons, worth nearly \$800 million, would be needed. However, while the Cuban population figure in 1965 was one million higher than the estimate of 6.5 million projected by the National Bank a decade earlier, sugar production in the 1960's averaged roughly 5 per cent per year below that of the previous decade. For the Castro regime, in a vain effort to break the tyranny of sugar monoculture, undertook a program of industrialization and agricultural diversification which, among other things, involved the uprooting of some 350,000 acres of cane. Thus, as Thomas notes, "the Cuban Revolution neglected in fact the only crop which, like it or

⁸ Gutelman is a Belgian economist who spent three years in Cuba drafting production programs for state farms, and he is also the author of *La Agricultura Socializada en Cuba* ("Socialized Agriculture in Cuba").

⁹ For detailed accounts of this new right-wing paramilitary terror in Latin America, see my "Slaughter in Guatemala" and "Santo Domingo: The Politics of Terror," *New York Review of Books*, May 20 and July 22, 1971 respectively.

¹⁰ The rains that normally come before January and after May sharply dilute the sugar content in the cane. Dumont reports that this unseasonable harvest produced only 200,000 tons of sugar with yields from the cane of 5.5 per cent sucrose, compared with 11 or 12 per cent in the regular harvest season.

not, they could live on in totalitarian conditions; for sugar can be cut by an army or by machines and it is ground by an industrial proletariat." Yet, as Thomas also notes, "even if the ten million tons had been achieved, Cuba would still have been producing less sugar per head of population than she was in 1925, while the long-term costs of this grand Potemkin-type harvest cannot easily be measured."

The strategy for the Ten-Million-Ton *zafra* was drafted at a meeting of the Cuban leadership in Santa Clara on November 26 and 27, 1966. The regime's technicians pored over every aspect of Cuba's previous record harvest—7.3 million tons during 110 days of grinding in 1952—the way military academy classes study one of Napoleon's great battles. Since two-thirds of Cuba's 152 mills were built in the 19th century, the newest of them in 1927, and since maintenance of this equipment in the early years of the Revolution had been poor, a task of enormous proportions was at hand. To expand the acreage, grinding, and transport capacity of the mills so as to put them within reach of producing ten million tons, the regime in 1965 had programmed investments adding up to more than one billion dollars, a sum greater than the total assets of the sugar industry in 1965.¹¹ New machinery was installed in scores of mills, and sugar-cane acreage was to be expanded by 40 per cent, or an additional 3.5 million acres, with new cane varieties and fertilizers introduced to prolong the *zafra* into the rainy season. In the old U.S.-built mills, the cane was washed in new French filters, the sugar crystals separated in East German centrifugal machines, loaded by Czech cranes onto Rumanian railroad cars which took them to the ports where new Japanese suction-loading equipment poured them directly into the hulls of Soviet ships. Even with these improvements, nearly 20 per cent of the harvest still had to be hauled to the mills in oxcarts. All in all, the great harvest mobilized 36,000 oxcarts, 6,000 tractors, 6,000 trucks, 80 locomotives, and 29,000 railroad cars.¹²

THROUGHOUT the history of the Cuban sugar industry, labor was always the scarcest factor of production, and many experts doubted for that reason that the Castro regime would be able to mobilize enough labor to bring in a harvest of ten million tons. Thomas writes that during the sugar boom of the early 19th century, "slaves were the biggest single investment on all Cuban sugar plantations," constituting roughly one-third of the cost. Karol explains the scarcity and low productivity of manpower in the *zafras* under Castro in this way:

Cuba no longer has the old professional *macheteros* who can cut 400 to 500 *arrobas* [units of 25 pounds] of cane per day. These men have now become independent thanks to the agricultural reforms or else they have moved to town

in search of more regular and less strenuous employment. . . . In the past, whenever a particularly good harvest was expected, Cuba would recruit seasonal workers from Haiti or from Jamaica; her own labor force could not cope with any *zafra* greater than four to five million tons. It goes without saying that since the Revolution the import of foreign semi-slaves has completely stopped. Who then cuts the cane? Much of the work is done by volunteers—soldiers and students . . . [and] every factory or department is expected to send part of its labor force or staff into the fields on a rotational system. . . . The norm (per volunteer) is now fixed at 100 *arrobas* per day—i.e., at less than 25 per cent of the alleged output of a good *machetero* before the Revolution. And yet, most of the casual laborers from the town seem to find it difficult to reach even that goal—Havana puts their average output at 60 to 80 *arrobas* per day. These figures (from official sources) set a problem in elementary arithmetic: if a five-million-ton *zafra* called for 400,000 *macheteros* cutting some 400 *arrobas* per day before the Revolution, how many nonprofessional *macheteros*, cutting between 60 and 80 *arrobas* per day, are needed to bring in a ten-million-ton *zafra*? The result is clearly beyond the capacity of a country with a mere seven million inhabitants. . . . It should be noted that, because the volunteers are paid their normal wages no matter how low their sugar output, the *zafra* is a major generator of inflation, and so helps to depress real wages.

Nevertheless, in Fidel Castro's detailed public accounts of the failure of the Ten-Million-Ton *zafra*, a manpower shortage was not given as one of the reasons. In his speech of July 26, 1971, Castro recalled that some 360,000 *macheteros* were mobilized at the peak of the 1970 harvest, and that most of Cuba's 315,000 secondary, technical, and university students had been spending from four to five months annually cutting cane.¹³ If one adds to these some 130,000 professional canecutters, 100,000 army troops, and an undetermined number of prisoners and detainees awaiting expatriation to the United States, one could conservatively calculate a work force of more than 700,000 for the 1970 *zafra*, apart from the industrial workers of the sugar mills. In his televised speech of May 20, 1970, when he first explained why the ten million-ton goal would not be reached, Castro said:

What very often happened was this: In Oriente

¹¹ Gutelman observes that the ten million tons would have been much more feasible in 1972 than in 1970, since new milling capacity could be installed and surrounding lands shifted into sugar without causing massive dislocations in the economy. As it turned out, some mills had high milling capacity but insufficient cane, while others were swamped with cane they could not process.

¹² James Kutas, "La realidad del azúcar" ("The Reality of Sugar"), in *Vision*, September 12, 1969. Also Michel Torguy, "La Gran Zafra" ("The Great Harvest"), *El Universal*, Caracas, March 24, 1970.

¹³ From *Granma*, Havana, July 27, 1971, p. 3.

Province, for example, all those giant sugar mills had all the necessary manpower, trucks, cane loaders, everything, waiting for the mills to reach their scheduled levels of grinding capacity. The result? Constant breakdowns and stoppages. Therefore, in order not to have an accumulation of cut cane lying on the ground, it was necessary time and again to paralyze 40,000 or 50,000 workers. Farmers mobilized from the mountains of Baracoa or the Sierra Maestra, from all over, who had gone to these canefields moved by tremendous enthusiasm, were asked to stop cutting. And this had a tremendous demoralizing effect. . . . We—we alone—are the ones who have lost the battle. The administrative apparatus and the leaders of the Revolution are the ones who lost the battle. The people have measured up to the ten million—and to eleven million as well.¹⁴

It seems, then, that the headlong rush to produce ten million tons generated two major miscalculations. First, the Castro regime's planners were, as usual, grossly over-optimistic in what their sugar yields were to be; indeed, the yields in 1970 seemed the lowest in thirty years. Second, large amounts of new equipment had been installed in the mills without being properly tested, and so broke down at first use. When, said Castro, this began happening repeatedly in Oriente province, which contains the largest amount of cane and grinding capacity,

it was decided to call a halt on all road construction work on highways and mountain roads that was not directly related to the harvest, all the road-building equipment was concentrated on the building of roads for hauling cane in that province. This concentration of building equipment included the equipment which was getting ready to start the building of several dams. . . . The situation remained unchanged in January and, therefore, things were getting worse. The railroad line in the Guiteras sugar mills was insufficient to handle the problem. Now it was not a matter of 7.5 million hundredweight but almost 17.5 million hundredweight of cane left over, and no solution in sight.

The frantic building of feeder roads and the laying of railroad track in the midst of the great harvest to save huge expanses of ripe sugar cane, taxing even further the overworked labor brigades of volunteers and soldiers and prisoners, gave the Ten-Million-Ton *zafra* an epic quality worthy of the battle on the ice in *Alexander Nevsky* or Cecil B. De Mille's *The Ten Commandments*. The consequences of this cinematic spectacle were described in Castro's speech of July 26, 1970:

In reality we have some debts pending with irony, with the illusion we have indulged in at times. We have some debts pending with our

needs. We have debts pending with poverty. We have debts pending with underdevelopment. And we have debts unpaid with the suffering of our people. . . . One of the many tragic things in our country . . . is our lack of cadres, of men with a high enough level of training and intelligence who are carrying out the complex tasks of production. These tasks are apparently easy. Most of the time we make the mistake of minimizing the difficulties . . . and we have seen this happen to a number of well-trained comrades, comrades well-known for their iron will and their desire to do a good job . . . we have seen them, in a specific task, going through what is practically an apprenticeship that lasts one, two, or even three years before they begin to do an efficient job. If only we could solve our problems by simply replacing these men! We have to make changes. There is no question that many comrades have worn themselves out. . . . I am in no way trying to pin the blame on anyone not in the revolutionary leadership and myself. [Applause] Unfortunately, this self-criticism cannot be accompanied by other logical solutions. It would be better to tell the people to look for somebody else. [Shouts of "No!"] . . . I believe that we, the leaders of this Revolution, have cost the people too much in our process of learning. The people can replace us whenever they wish—right now if you so desire! [Shouts of "No!" and "Fidel! Fidel! Fidel!"] One of our most difficult problems—and we are paying for it dearly—is our heritage of ignorance. . . . And if the enemy makes use of some of the things we say and causes us deep shame, let us welcome it! [Applause] The embarrassment will be welcome if we know how to turn the shame into strength, if we know how to turn the shame into a will to work, if we know how to turn the shame into dignity, and if we know how to turn it into morale! [Applause and shouts of "Fidel, Fidel, Fidel!"]

However, Castro rehabilitated himself within two months. He fired his Sugar Industry Minister, and in September 1970 he told a provincial assembly of the Cuban Workers Confederation: "Those technocrats, geniuses, super-scientists assured me that they knew what to do in order to produce the ten million tons. But it was proven, first, that they did not know how to do it and, second, that they exploited the rest of the economy by receiving large amounts of resources . . . while there are factories that could have improved with a better distribution of those resources that were allocated to the Ten-Million-Ton plan." This is what several of Castro's economic advisers had been saying all the time.

III

HUGH THOMAS's *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* is surely one of the finest histories to be written in English in this century; it is the product of ten years of labor by a prodigious talent who in 1961, at the age of twenty-

¹⁴ Fidel Castro, speech of May 20, 1970 (official translation), Ediciones COR, Havana.

nine, had already published a 900-page classic, *The Spanish Civil War*. Not only does Thomas's *Cuba* give us the island's history in rich and voluminous detail; it also makes Cuba a kind of microcosm of the struggle of tropical peoples, issuing from the poisoned womb of slavery, to achieve a political economy that would transform and dignify traditional modes of labor.

The detonator of this social struggle was the great slave revolt in neighboring Haiti in the 1790's (the first fully successful slave revolution in modern history and an event to which the response in the rest of the Americas uncannily resembled the response to the Cuban Revolution nearly two centuries later).

After the Haitian revolt was organized, under the leadership of a black coachman named Toussaint L'Ouverture, by means of voodoo drums transmitting messages between the plantations, roughly 1,000 estates were destroyed and 2,000 whites were killed (more victims, Thomas says, than under the guillotine of the French Revolution). "The savagery and completeness of the revolution," Thomas writes, "was a revelation, though it would not have occurred in a colony less filled with feverish hatreds, itself deriving from the recent import of a huge mass of new slaves and the arrival of new and anxious money-grubbing proprietors." In the ensuing years all of the slave economies of the New World felt themselves threatened with an extension of the Haitian revolt which, on a lesser scale, was a recurrent experience in their own lands. Six decades after the Haitian uprising, U.S. diplomats in Europe attempting to negotiate the purchase of Cuba from Spain reported back to the Secretary of State in Washington:

We should be unworthy of our gallant forefathers and commit base treason against our posterity if Cuba were to be "Africanized" and become another Santo Domingo [Haiti], with all its attendant horrors to the white race, and suffer the flames to extend to our neighboring shores, seriously to endanger or actually destroy the fabric of our Union.

In view of the ever-present danger of a slave uprising, Cuba refrained from participating in the national independence movement led by Simón Bolívar in Spanish America in which former slaves played a critical role. The possibilities thus remaining to Cuba in the early 19th century were three: being ravaged by the kind of slave uprising that had just occurred in neighboring Haiti, outright annexation by the United States, or the immediately easier course of remaining nominally within the Spanish empire while becoming integrated into the U.S. economy. These economic ties had become so strong that in 1826—before the destruction of the Spanish empire in South America had been completed—783 of the 964 ships that entered Havana harbor were American. Throughout the 19th and early 20th cen-

turies there were powerful annexationist parties in both Cuba and the mainland. Typical of this attitude was Secretary of State John Quincy Adams's letter to the U.S. minister in Spain:

Cuba . . . has become an object of transcendent importance to the commercial and political interests of our Union. Its commanding position . . . its safe and capacious harbor of the Havana . . . the nature of its productions and of its wants . . . give it an importance in the sum of our national interests with which that of no other foreign territory can be compared and little inferior to that which binds the different members of the Union together.

Thomas concludes, and I agree, that annexation would have been preferable to the ambiguous condition of total economic dependence on the U.S. and fig-leaf political sovereignty that existed from the departure of the Spanish in 1898 until Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959. Several attempts at annexation by purchase nearly succeeded, but all foundered on questions of race and slavery. In 1868, after the U.S. Civil War ended the prospects of Cuba's being annexed as a slave territory and after a new revolution occurred in Spain, an insurrection seeking Cuban independence and led mainly by white planters broke out in Oriente province. The independence revolt soon developed social-revolutionary overtones as fugitive slaves from Oriente proclaimed themselves rebels. Among conservative financial backers of the independence movement the fear became so strong that a "black republic" would be founded by Antonio Maceo, the leading mulatto general, that Maceo wrote in 1876 to Cuba's provisional President: ". . . I must protest energetically with all my strength that neither now nor at any time am I to be regarded as an advocate of a Negro Republic."

THE 1868 revolt finally was put down ten years after it started, but as a result of it slavery was ended in Cuba and the economy of the island became more and more closely tied to the United States. American merchants and engineers arrived, bringing with them new mill machinery that dramatically expanded grinding capacity. American consortiums voraciously absorbed Cuban mills and plantations; the United Fruit Co. was incorporated in 1899—the year after President McKinley sent troops to Cuba to support the second Cuban independence uprising—and immediately bought 200,000 acres of cheap land in Oriente. A U.S. military government was organized the same year, which brought in money and machines, civil servants, missionaries, and schoolteachers. One of the finest passages in Thomas's long history is this vignette on the childhood of dictator Fulgencio Batista, which gives so vivid a sense of how the Cuban people lived from that time until the 1959 Revolution:

Batista's birth had been during the year (1901)

that the *Boston* mill had been built by the United Fruit Co. so that it is reasonable to suppose that his father (a sugar port laborer) had gone there to seek work. Both Batista's parents appear to have been mulatto. . . . The young Fulgencio had had a childhood both varied and disorganized. He went to a public school at Banes and afterwards to a Quaker school at night: in the day he was already cutting cane. He left home at the age of 14 when his mother, Carmela, died, and worked on a sugar plantation at Holguín. Then he became water-boy at a plantation in San Germán, and afterwards the timekeeper of a workgang. Thereafter, he went back to Banes and worked as a cane cutter. After that, he lingered around the railway station at Dumois doing odd jobs for some time, and then went to the sugar port of Antilla. There a contingent of the army was posted, because of a threatened strike, real or suspected. Batista then began to work for the army, washing bridles and again doing odd jobs. He was known as the *mulato lindo* (the pretty mulatto). He went on to Alto Cedro, working again as a cane cutter, and then returned to Holguín where he became first a tailor's, then a carpenter's apprentice, and after that a hand boy at a barber's. He also for a time found work as a brakeman on the Consolidated Railways. This shiftless and feckless career was unusual only in that most Cubans did not have such good fortune at finding new work as soon as they had lost their old employment.

THE so-called Sergeants' Revolt of 1933, which Batista led while serving as an army stenographer in Camp Columbia outside Havana, was the most important political event in Cuba during the 20th century until Fidel Castro's rise to power. Sergeant Stenographer Batista, whose "knowledge of all parts of Cuba and all sections of society would make him when he gained revolutionary power a most formidable opponent," brilliantly channeled to his own ends the student and popular agitation that led to the fall of Dictator Gerardo Machado, who was closely linked to U.S. sugar and financial interests. After Machado's fall, U.S. Ambassador Sumner Welles, Franklin Roosevelt's old school chum from Groton, became so frightened of a Communist takeover that he got on the phone to Secretary of State Cordell Hull in Washington the day after the Sergeants' Revolt to ask for the landing of U.S. Marines.¹⁵ Although this request was refused, Washington steadfastly denied diplomatic recognition to the government of Grau

San Martín (which had taken over in the wake of the revolt) while U.S. banks refused to finance harvesting of the 1934 sugar crop. Grau retained the support of radical politicians and student leaders like Carlos Prío, but he was ultimately forced to resign, clearing the way for a decade of rule by Batista: six of these years manipulating puppets from behind the scenes at Camp Columbia and the rest in his glory as constitutional President.

By the final year of Batista's first Presidential term (1940-44), amid the cordiality generated by the Allied effort in World War II, the political relations among the United States, Batista, and the Communists who supported him had become so cozy that Blas Roca, then the Communists' Secretary-General and today a member of Cuba's Politburo, could write that "the imperialist era has ended, as Sumner Welles has pointed out." Thomas observes that, although he enriched himself greatly,

Batista's national regime left behind a state where, it seemed, in the shadow of the New Deal, the most overt and outrageous side of U.S. involvement in Cuba had been removed and where the state had made an apparently decisive step towards a form at least of socialism. There were few countries in the Americas where the trade unions were so well established and exercised such a powerful role.

Batista had respected his own 1940 constitution—one of the landmark democratic charters in Latin America—and thus could not put across his own candidate to succeed him. Back came the old popular idol Grau San Martín, and that was the beginning of the end. Thomas writes:

The trust which the people of Cuba had in [Grau] was wasted in a revel of corrupt government which . . . exceeded that of Batista. Already a rich man because of an extensive private [medical] practice and the fortune which he inherited from his father, Grau turned his presidency into an orgy of theft ill-disguised by emotional nationalistic speeches. He did more than any other single man to kill the hope of democratic practice in Cuba.

Thus, for example, Grau's Education Minister arrived in Miami in 1948 with \$20 million in his suitcase after just two years in Grau's cabinet. And when Grau himself was accused of corruption by his successor, Carlos Prío, he demanded a public investigation to clear his name, but as soon as the hearing had begun six masked men broke into the courtroom with guns and stole thirty-five files of evidence. Throughout the Grau and Prío Presidencies gangsterism and political assassination were rife, especially in the labor movement and the universities. Rolando Masferrer, the ex-Communist who was then a pro-government Senator and later, with his private army of "Tigers," a pillar of Batista's second dictatorship, "rode around Cuba in his Cadillac like a pirate king,

¹⁵ Thomas reproduces the transcript of this remarkable telephone conversation, which is strikingly similar to President Johnson's version of his phone talk with Ambassador William T. Bennett in Santo Domingo before dispatching U.S. troops there in 1965. A moderating influence on Roosevelt was exercised by Josephus Daniels, his Ambassador to Mexico, who later labored so effectively to avoid an open rupture with Mexico over the expropriation of foreign oil firms.

surrounded by bodyguards." When a friend objected to him that his prospective 1952 Presidential candidate was a gangster, Masferrer replied: "Yes, *chico*, but we're all gangsters. What do you expect? This isn't Europe. Only Chibás is not a gangster and he's mad."

Senator Eduardo Chibás, a wealthy former student leader, was the most brilliant orator of the time and yet another Cuban messiah; he was leader of the opposition to Prío, and his great theme was corruption. But unable to prove some charges he had made against the Education Minister, he delivered a hysterical radio speech and seconds later shot himself in the stomach. Chibás's suicide hastened the fall of Prío in much the same way as the self-immolation of the *bonzes* in Saigon a dozen years later led to the collapse of the Diem regime. Batista had already announced his Presidential candidacy for the 1952 elections, but under pressure from friends he decided to stage a coup a few months before the election. Thomas concludes:

Batista had always been popular outside educated circles in the past and something remained of that popularity; and then, who cared about the fall of Prío outside the constitutional middle class? Chibás had done his work of destruction too well: no one believed in Prío's system. Most indeed settled to accept Batista with relief.

A year after Batista's coup of March 1952, the Cuban historian Herminio Portell Vilá met a former student of his, Fidel Castro, in a Havana bar and was told by the young man that he planned to strike a spectacular psychological blow at Batista by attacking the Moncada army barracks at Santiago. The professor tried to discourage Castro, but the attack was carried out on July 26, 1953 as the kind of operatic gesture worthy of Chibás and Martí. But Fidel Castro survived, and this has always been the difference. Of the 111 men participating in the attack, 68 were killed, but Castro's political career was launched.

FIDEL CASTRO was the kind of young man that Latin American Communists like to speak of as having "a low political culture." His father, like Batista's, had been a laborer for the United Fruit Co. in Oriente, but Angel Castro was white—a veteran of the 200,000-man Spanish army that had come to suppress the Cuban insurrection of 1895—and as a United Fruit caretaker "hacked his farm out of forest, perhaps sometimes on moonless nights, perhaps by stealing title deeds." Fidel was the second of five children born to Angel Castro's cook, whom he later married after his first wife died. Angel Castro grew rich and sent Fidel to the aristocratic *Colegio Belén*, run by the Jesuits in Havana, where he obtained high marks without

much effort and won a prize in 1943-44 as Cuba's best all-around schoolboy athlete.¹

When Castro entered the University of Havana he plunged at once into the gangsterized student politics of the time. Within a week he got himself elected president of his first-year class in the Law Faculty after challenging the student body president to a fight, then tried to form a cabal among the other class presidents to oust the older leader. In 1947 he participated in an abortive invasion of the Dominican Republic by Dominican exiles and Cuban "action groups." Several months later he was arrested, but then released, in connection with the gangland-style murder of Manolo Castro (no relation) who was State Secretary of Sports and virtual dictator of the University of Havana. Shortly thereafter, in April 1948, he was in Bogotá with a student delegation protesting the Pan American ministerial conference there to organize the Organization of American States when the Colombian liberal idol Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was fatally shot, leading to the terrible *Bogotazo*, a long orgy of looting and shooting that cost an estimated 3,000 lives.¹⁶

Summing up Castro's career in student politics, Thomas says:

The revolutionary violence which had characterized the students who had overthrown Machado [in 1933] never lost its fundamentally romantic appeal. The future leader of the Cuban socialist revolution was bloodied in politics during the machine-gun and big-car era in the time of Grau and, whatever part he personally played, it is evident that he learned much about the nature of Cuban political institutions, their feebleness, their susceptibility to violence and their corruption.

Nevertheless, neither this nor any other book has undertaken to explain why the pervasive gangsterism and corruption of traditional Cuban politics disappeared so suddenly following Castro's rise to power in 1959.

Given this background, it is indeed remarkable that in succeeding years Fidel Castro was able to generate a mystique about himself as the revolutionary savior of Cuba. Yet while there is still about him something of the style of the student leader writ-large, the charisma of his public personality was created with the Moncada attack in 1953, his spectacular trial defense and year in jail, his exile in Mexico and the two-year guerrilla insurrection in the Sierra Maestra that led to his triumphant march across the island and into Havana in January 1959. Thanks to Herbert Matthews of the New York *Times* who secretly

¹⁶ Castro's presence in Bogotá at the time has often been cited as "proof" that he was always a Communist. However, after reviewing the evidence, Thomas concludes, "It is true that Castro did get involved in the riots, but obscure how much fighting he did; it is evidently incorrect to suppose that Castro was an agent of the riots. . . ."

went to the mountains of Oriente in February 1957—barely two months after Castro had established himself in the Sierra Maestra!—the young rebel was transformed in the public mind from a hunted *guerrillero* whose survival was doubted even by his own followers to an “invincible” prophet on a mountaintop, “an educated, dedicated fanatic, a man of ideals, of courage and of remarkable qualities of leadership.” Matthews’s exaggeration of the size of Castro’s force, an error hard to avoid in this kind of situation, helped draw more city people into the revolutionary cause. By mid-1957 the heads of the CIA station in Havana were supporting Castro, and explicitly encouraged the September 1957 naval mutiny in Cienfuegos that was organized by Castro’s July 26th Movement.

The apogee of Castro’s popularity with the CIA came during his April 1959 visit to Washington, when he was prevailed upon to meet the agency’s chief expert on Communism in Latin America, a Central European named Droller, who was later to appear in Miami as the famous “Mr. Bender,” the CIA’s operational chief directing the preparations for the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. However, when Mr. Bender emerged from his three-hour meeting with Castro in 1959, he told the Cuban Finance Minister: “Castro is not only not a Communist, he is a strong anti-Communist fighter.”

Castro seems to have realized very early that to consolidate his personal power two steps were needed: the delivery of dramatic and immediate benefits to Cuba’s poorer classes, and a disengagement from the political influence of the United States. So house rents and installment payments were cut in half, loan-sharks were arrested, racially-segregated clubs and beaches were opened to all, army barracks were turned into schools, popular militias were organized, and expropriated haciendas became workers’ cooperatives. All this was accompanied by guerrilla-like skirmishing, featuring both blandishments and recriminations, with U.S. business and diplomatic interests in Cuba, until a complete break occurred in 1961. But the program never worked. According to Thomas:

The political revolution following the capture of power in 1959 was to have been accompanied by, first, an immediate increase in standards of living; second, a rapid industrialization; and third, a switch away from that emphasis on sugar which had played for so long such a large and, as many thought, destructive part in Cuban society. None of these things occurred.

Instead, the prophecy made thirty years before by Cuba’s leading historian was being fulfilled: “The day that Cuba finally becomes one huge cane plantation, the republic and its sovereignty will vanish, and we are embarked on this course.”¹⁷

IV

K. S. KAROL is one of those true believers who worships Revolution like a distant star but finds great difficulty in coming to terms with its tarnished, earthly realities. Although Karol’s book, *Guerrillas in Power*, is seriously flawed by prejudice and errors of fact that are wrought by his livid hatred for the Soviet Union, it is of considerable value as a chronicle of the changes in the Cuban Revolution since Che Guevara’s death in Bolivia in October 1967.

Karol, having just published a book praising the Chinese Cultural Revolution, returned to Cuba in mid-1967 for the first time in six years to discover that a “Cuban heresy” was being brashly advanced by Fidel Castro under the noses of his Soviet benefactors. In the almost giddy atmosphere of the founding conference of the Latin American Solidarity Organization (OLAS)—a kind of Castroite Comintern for guerrilla insurrections—under huge portraits of Che, who was still fighting in Bolivia, Castro told Karol: “I wonder whether Lenin did not make a mistake in signing the peace of Brest-Litovsk. Who knows what might not have happened, had the young Soviet Republic taken the risk of waging a revolutionary war, thus helping the Western proletariat to free itself.” President Osvaldo Dorticós, a Communist in his youth and later a wealthy lawyer and commodore of the Cienfuegos Yacht Club, and yet described by Karol as “a man of very great simplicity who has taken Che Guevara’s place as the top theorist of Cuban Communism,” also told him:

We are about to build Communism. The aim of our revolution is not to build a socialist state, but to move with minimum delay toward full Communism. It is pure illusion to think that Communism will come automatically, just as soon as the conditions are right. We have to prepare for it here and now, by partial transformations of our society.

When Karol asked him if that meant there were fundamental differences between the Cuban and Russian views, Dorticós replied: “Well, yes. We have our little heresy.”

This “Cuban heresy” meant, in essence, “armed struggle” throughout Latin America and simultaneous construction of socialism and Communism at home. The move toward Communism meant attempts at eradicating the last vestiges of capitalism in Cuba, shifting from “material” to “moral” production incentives, espousing Guevara’s ideal of the “New Man” (as best expounded in his last essay “On Man and Socialism in Cuba”), and eliminating the use of

¹⁷ From Ramiro Guerra y Sanchez, *Sugar and Society in the Caribbean: An Economic History of Cuban Agriculture*. Originally published, Havana, 1927; English edition: Yale University Press, 1964.

money for such public services as water, electricity, phones, sports events, movies, and housing. Said Castro to Karol:

Listen to me. The Chinese may be doing interesting experiments but we are trying to go much farther than they have. Money remains at the core of their social program, even though its sights are set on equality while the Russians deliberately encourage differences in income. We intend to get rid of the whole money myth, rather than tamper with it. We want to abolish money altogether.

REFLECTING upon this "Cuban heresy," Cuba's Soviet allies might well have found echoes of their own recent past. Guevara's "New Man" after all was not very different from Khrushchev's "New Soviet Man" as described in the Soviet Communist party's 1962 program, which also promised the abolition of money as part of a rapid march toward Communism. The ascendancy of moral over material incentives was a major feature of the Soviet experience in the late 1920's and 1930's, symbolized by the Stakhanovite super-workers glorified during Stalin's first great industrialization drive. The Cuban Stakhanovites are the "millionaire cane-cutters,"¹⁸ as well as the special brigades of labor heroes such as the 24,000-member Centennial Youth Column of Camaguey and the Mariana Grajales Feminine Brigade of *Macheteras*.¹⁹ However, even though moral incentives operate through a romanticization of work, they tend to breed feelings of resentment and degradation among the workers themselves. Soviet workers in the 1930's occasionally smashed machines and murdered Stakhanovite labor heroes; Dumont reports a similar reaction from Cuban workers when

84 Soviet tractors arrived in Oriente in the spring of 1969 equipped with headlights for night work. Tractor-drivers working at night generally live in overcrowded barracks with bad ventilation, very hot during the day, making it very hard to sleep well. To avoid night work, some of them unscrewed the headlights and tossed them into the canals. This was not the CIA at work, or counterrevolutionary sabotage, but a simple reaction of self-defense by exhausted people, of resistance against efforts demanded of them which, if they are not labor heroes, were felt by some to be excessive and badly compensated.

Be all that as it may, the rhetoric of "the Cuban heresy" quickly receded into the background following Che's death in Bolivia just two months after the OLAS conference. At the same time *Pravda* published an article by the Argentine Communist theoretician Rodolfo Ghioldi attacking "petit-bourgeois nationalists" for their "extreme adventurism" and for "creating the concept of local or continental exception in order to justify deviations from Marxist-Leninist teach-

ings."²⁰ Karol says the Russians later apologized to the Cubans for the article. Nevertheless, a move toward Soviet orthodoxy seems to have begun with Guevara's death and to have gained momentum with Castro's very qualified endorsement of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia ten months later.²¹

In January 1968, soon after Karol's return to Havana, there occurred the so-called "microfaction" trial of Aníbal Escalante and other leaders of the old *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP), Cuba's pre-revolutionary Communist party. Karol's account of this sensational political trial is very sketchy, but the documents published in the party newspaper *Granma* at the time are extremely revealing. Escalante, who organized the Castro regime's first revolutionary political apparatus before he was purged in 1962 for "sectarianism" and power-grabbing,²² was accused before the Central Committee by Defense Minister Raul Castro of leading a pathetic corridor conspiracy of ex-PSP cadres who met secretly at wakes and funerals and at the farm Escalante was managing. The conspirators agreed that the Cuban Revolution was being run by "petit-bour-

¹⁸ A millionaire cane-cutter has cut one million *arrobas* (one arroba=25 lbs.) of cane; Cuba has its double and triple millionaire *macheteros*.

¹⁹ See, for example, "Tres Años de CJC," in *Bohemia*, Havana, July 9, 1971, p. 34. The Centennial Youth Column was one of Castro's astute political maneuvers, sending many thousands of working-class youth to study trades, cut cane, and clear lands in Camaguey Province, a naturally rich but underpopulated and traditionally conservative area. The earlier mass mobilizations of the Cuban Revolution have been analyzed in Richard Fagen's *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (Stanford University Press, 1969).

²⁰ This article is quoted more fully in my "The Legacy of Che Guevara," COMMENTARY, December 1967.

²¹ In that speech, while supporting the invasion, Castro audaciously censured the Soviet Union with the question: "Could it be imagined that at the end of 20 years of Communism in our country—of Socialist revolution—a group of honest revolutionaries in this country, terrified at the prospects of a retrogression toward counterrevolutionary positions and imperialism, would see the need of asking the aid of friendly armies to prevent such a situation from occurring? Cuban visitors and scholarship students have many times returned [from Eastern Europe] saturated with dissatisfaction. They have said the youth there are highly influenced by all the ideas and all the tastes of the Western European countries; in many places there they only speak about money; in many places all they talk about is material incentives of all sorts, about profits and wages; and really an internationalist, a Communist awareness is not being developed."

²² An excellent analysis of the 1962 "Escalante Affair" is given by Theodore Draper in his "Five Years of Castro's Cuba," COMMENTARY, January 1964, and in his books, *Castro's Revolution: Myths and Realities* and *Castroism: Theory and Practice* (Praeger, 1962 and 1965). Escalante had served a long apprenticeship in Russia during the 1930's; he was the PSP's Organizational Secretary and the editor of its newspaper *Hoy* from its founding in 1938 until 1959. He was also, at the beginning, one of the few PSP leaders to urge party support for Castro's guerrilla insurrection.

geois elements," that Che Guevara was a "Trotskyite" whose departure from Cuba was "a salutary event for the Revolution," that promotion of guerrilla activities in Venezuela was "an adventure." They allegedly had said: "No one understands Fidel: he is mad." But much more important was Escalante's prediction that Cuba would fail to reach its 1970 harvest goal of ten million tons, and thus would be driven decisively under the influence of the Soviet Union. According to the published statement attributed to Octavio Fernandez, a key "microfaction" member:

Aníbal explained that from 1970 on the difficulties will increase because economically we won't be able to reach the ten million tons of sugar, since the measures needed to achieve this are not being taken and the rhythm of present *zafra*s shows that we will have to increase by four million tons in two years. The scarcity of both food and industrial products will not be relieved as planned, and for all this the offers made to the people will not be realized, such as the freedom from rents in 1970. Politically, the Latin American Communist parties will be stronger . . . and they will be in condition to direct more fully the struggle in their respective countries. . . . With respect to the Soviet Union, we will become much closer in all policy, eliminating a series of discrepancies that we presently have. . . .²³

It is fairly clear that Castro used the "microfaction" trial to get rid of his pro-Soviet opposition inside Cuba and show himself again as absolute master of the island while, at the same time, yielding to irresistible pressures to reach a closer understanding with the Soviet Union. But it also appears that poor Escalante was right. Not only did the 1970 harvest fail and not only do the acute shortages of consumer goods continue, but the position of the pro-Soviet Communist parties in Latin America has been greatly strengthened by the Chilean Communists' key role in the 1970 election victory and the *Unidad Popular* government of Salvador Allende in Chile. Moreover, the second fall of Escalante has been followed by both a militarization of the Cuban economy and society and an open break with Western intellectual tradition, which means that the libertarian pretensions of the Cuban Revolution are at an end.

V

THE "pursuit of freedom," in Thomas's phrase, is over, then, but the question of survival remains. Survival in itself has been the greatest achievement of the Cuban Revolution which, despite many errors and privations, apparently has conserved the consent of the governed to an appreciable degree without any external coercive force, such as the presence of foreign troops. Cuba under Castro—like the Soviet Union—has been spared the internal convulsions

suffered by the Western democracies, and especially the United States, in the past ten years. One reason for this relative stability is that the regime enjoys a monopoly of propaganda, political organization, and armed force, which makes any alternative to what already exists almost inconceivable. But the social fabric of Soviet-style regimes is also tightened—intentionally or not—by restricted personal consumption, excesses of which have seriously undermined the cohesion of Western societies through the exaggerated individualism of its members. While Soviet-type societies, including Cuba, have characteristically failed to attract or generate enough technology to compensate for their burdensome social overhead costs and deficient human motivation, they do seem to be equipped with the internal controls to deal with the declining ration of goods that must come with the projected doubling of world population in the next three decades. Such controls will become more important as mankind's political economy is governed increasingly by the ethos of stability instead of growth.

These longer-range considerations, of course, cannot begin to justify the fact that the Cuban family of today is rationed to one roll of toilet paper, 2.5 cakes of soap, and one package of detergent per month. Moreover, despite the fact that in this decade Cuba has received more economic aid per capita than any nation on earth, with an incredibly high investment rate of nearly 30 per cent of GNP, mainly in agriculture, the island's food production has declined in per-capita, and perhaps also in absolute, terms since 1958.²⁴

It is true that the incapacity to absorb new capital resources rationally is not confined to Cuba alone among the Latin American countries. It is also true that great social revolutions, left to themselves, tend to revert initially to simpler social forms. Thus Cuba's shift back from an urbanized, commercial society to a plantation economy resembles the return to African-style subsistence agriculture after the Haitian slave revolt, the revival of pre-industrial forms of mineral exploitation after the tin mines were nationalized in Bolivia, and the peasant *ejido* (or communal land-ownership) after the civil war and agrarian reform in Mexico. Cuba, however, is in the unique and especially difficult position of being the first of the traditional export economies of Latin America to become part of the socialist

²³ *Granma*, January 31, 1968, p. 2.

²⁴ Cuban economic statistics are often ambiguous and contradictory. The most careful scholarly studies of Cuba's revolutionary economy are by Professor Carmelo Mesa Lago of the University of Pittsburgh's Center for International Studies. See his "Availability and Reliability of Statistics in Socialist Cuba," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. IV, Nos. 1 & 2 (1968), and his essays on central planning and production in an anthology edited by him, *Revolutionary Change in Cuba: Polity, Economy and Society* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971).

system, divorced from its neighbors and natural markets, a hardship that the new socialist government of Chile is trying to avoid.

Economically, the Cuban Revolution seems now to be doubly cursed. On the one hand, the elimination of businessmen, technicians, and foreign capital has deprived Cuba of the very respectable growth of manufacturing that has been achieved by other Latin American export economies like Chile, Peru, and Venezuela. On the other hand, although the Ten-Million-Ton *zafra* of 1970 was undertaken in the same spirit as other great surges of socialist nation-building like China's Great Leap Forward, Stalin's industrialization drive of the 1930's, and Khrushchev's New Lands and petrochemical production campaigns of the 1950's, and although they too failed to reach their stated goals, the difference is that they were part of an extraordinary process of capital accumulation and industrialization in large nations that were historically self-sufficient in supplying their internal markets, while Cuba's conversion to sugar socialism has involved a process of decapitalization of the economy as a whole. The island has been left with an over-specialized, under-productive export economy that shows a declining capacity to pay for the imported supplies on which Cuba has always depended, and on which it depends even more today.

As a result of the growing discontent stemming out of this economic disaster, Fidel Castro has had no choice but to expand his repressive apparatus. The recent penetration of the "Rebel Army" into key positions of economic, governmental, and party control is strikingly similar to

the increasing military-political power in China of Lin Piao and the "Party Soldiers" which began in the disarray following the Great Leap Forward of the late 1950's and which was consummated by the Cultural Revolution.²⁵ Indeed, Fidel and Mao share an affinity for militarism and populism that characteristically leads them to trust more in the army or in great popular mobilizations than in an entrenched party apparatus. In China the deification of Mao in combination with the spread of much real power among provincial military commanders has overtones of traditional Confucianism and warlordism; in Cuba the absolutism of Castro and his military retainers suggests the traditional cultural form of the Latin American *caudillo*.

For the Cuban Revolution, however, the assignment of the military to production tasks is a desperate and dangerous move that could severely test the army's loyalty if the economic mess continues. This underlines the fact that Fidel Castro has survived in power so far by personal political brilliance, while neglecting the work of institutionalization that might have given the Cuban Revolution a life of its own, and that might in addition have prevented the squandering of the good will and economic resources both of its own people and of its friends abroad. This may in the end constitute the real tragedy of the Castro regime.

²⁵ The militarization of the Chinese Communist party is ably described by Ralph L. Powell in his "The Increasing Power of Lin Piao and the Party Soldiers 1959-66," *China Quarterly*, No. 34, April-June 1968.

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Confessions of a Visiting Professor

Dan Jacobson

OF COURSE, we are all anti-Americans nowadays. So what is there to confess? What is there to say that hasn't already been said *ad nauseam*?

Well, let me begin with a brief chapter of literary autobiography. Many years ago I published a little book about my experiences during my first visit to the United States. (To California, to be exact.) The book has long been out of print, and I have no wish to see it resuscitated. In my introduction I declared flatly and boldly, "There are only two kinds of anti-American: the foolish and the sinister." I intended that sentence to be provocative, a deliberate bit of coat-trailing; and I knew exactly the kind of people in England, where the book was written, whom I wanted to provoke with it. When the book was published, however, none of the English reviewers or, as far as I can recall, any of the casual readers who spoke to me about it, was in the least provoked or irritated by my introduction. And for a simple reason. Most of the book's English readers took it to present a basically hostile report of my experiences in the United States, and a repellent picture of life in general there. So my remark fell flat on its face: the assumption was that it had been written in rather the same devious spirit as someone like Daniel Defoe, say, might have prefaced a novel about the successful adventures of a whore with the assurance that he intended his story to discourage his readers from venery.

That was fifteen years ago. Do I know my mind better today? Let the reader decide for himself. I have at least learned that it isn't for me to tell him in advance what I think I think.

THE older buildings of the campus where I lived for the duration of the summer school dated from the days when the university had been a private institution. They were gray, Grecian, decorated with ivy, fronted and backed with much rusticated stonework. They represented one idea of order, of how things should be. The new buildings, put up after the state had taken the place over, were eight- and nine- and ten-story struc-

tures, brick for the most part, in peculiarly disheartening shades of darker and lighter tan. The brickwork was relieved by panels of glass or metal up the elevator shafts and stairwells, their colors too being strangely dissatisfying to the eye, even unnerving. Those soft, synthetic off-greens, off-blues, and mauves might just have done in a boudoir, or perhaps in the waiting-room of a child psychiatrist; they were repugnant hanging over one to a height of a hundred feet or more. Scattered about the campus there were also temporary steel structures, like greatly elongated trailers, in the same boudoir colors, with pink thrown in for good measure.

There were wide lawns and some trees. They did little to mitigate the bareness and bleakness of the view, its utter lack of intimacy, its indifference both to the scale of the older buildings and to any imaginable aesthetic predilections of the inhabitants of the place. Farther afield, all around the campus, were flat, asphalted parking lots, wide enough by the look of them for jumbo jets to land on. The parking lots at the rear of the campus were mercilessly floodlit at night, presumably as an anti-crime measure. Those in front did not need to be floodlit, because they abutted on the city's main street, and the neon signs, street lamps, and passing traffic provided sufficient illumination.

Everything necessary to a campus was to be found there: libraries, cafeterias, a student union, a faculty club, laundromats, a shop, a children's day nursery, even a fountain that played away conscientiously. But it had all gone wrong. It had all turned into impersonality and tedium. It was the expression of a taste that wanted to do well, to be human, to soften its blow; and that ended up by being merely dismal and unreal. On the weekends, the desolation was complete; then the only sound to be heard was that from the air-conditioning plant of each locked, depopulated building, screaming at a different pitch from every other, across the silent pathways and stretches of shadeless grass. I was reminded of the maniacal shriek of the cicadas in the South African *veld* of my boyhood.

And the humans? The students? I found those I had to deal with courteous, open, as interested in their work as anybody could reasonably expect,

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and almost excessively hesitant about advancing their own ideas. I don't think I was particularly lucky in this respect. The other members of the faculty, both visiting and permanent, said the same about their students. I certainly came across none of the ravening wild men I'd been reading about in the press for the last many years. The present lot of students presumably feel that they owe no loyalty either to the doings of yesterday's young, or to their middle-aged promoters and flunkys.

Many of the students looked wild enough, it is true—their hair, their beards, their bare feet, their unslung breasts—but I was more struck by two other facts about their appearance that I've not seen mentioned in the voluminous writings of which they have been the subject. The first is that so startlingly many of the young men and women on the campus were prematurely obese. The second and related fact is how slovenly so many of them were—not so much in their clothes, which one knew about, but in their carriage. When they walked, they slouched. When they stood, they slumped. When they sat, they lay. Strangely enough, exceptions to this seemed to be found most commonly among minority groups not usually praised for their briskness of bearing: among the blacks, and among male homosexuals.*

BYOND the campus, the city. Its permanent inhabitants spoke of its ugliness with something that amounted almost to affection and respect. And I could see why. The main street ran between low, gimcrack business establishments of wood and stucco, with incomprehensible waste spaces here and there, broken pavements everywhere, a few more prominent buildings encrusted with bronze decorations like congealed candle-wax, and innumerable illuminated signs that blinked, revolved, or filled up with color and emptied themselves of it. After miles of this trailing, shabby chaos one came downtown at last, where the buildings gathered themselves together and raised themselves to great heights in shapes as arbitrary as the ransackings of an old movie lot: a Babylonian ziggurat, an inverted golden bowl, a wedding cake surmounted by two begowned female figures holding electric lights in their hands, a hypodermic syringe.

And that was that: that was the city. All

* Much the wildest looking of the students I had dealings with did not belong to any of my classes. He simply came into my office unannounced one day, and dumped at my feet a travel-stained knapsack that appeared to be stuffed with enough gear and provisions to see him safely to Katmandu. His black hair stood up on end in the style of a Guardsman's busby; his beard flowed down to cover his otherwise bare chest; from below, his great toenails regarded me like so many tortoises. It turned out that he was doing a thesis on Dickens at another university relatively nearby. As soon as he opened his mouth on the subject he began to produce the usual pedantic, boring gibberish about "patterns of symbolism" in *The Pickwick Papers*. . . .

around it sprawled tens of thousands of wooden houses; doomed trees suffering from Dutch elm disease; smaller versions of the main street, with their own frontages of funeral parlors, gas stations, and dry cleaners; then factories and warehouses, access roads, underpasses, poles, wires, and yet more suburbs of wooden houses . . . in repetition composed of meaningless change; change that was just another form of repetition. There were no hills or depressions of any kind, and thus the city had no contours or visible natural features—until one reached the lake, where banks of giant industrial plants stretched away to the horizon, fuming into the sky, above the bedimmed, restless water.

It looked like the republic of anomie and dislocation. But it was also, surprisingly, much more familiar to me than I would ever have thought beforehand it could be. It was what I had remembered and forgotten from a visit to a rather similar city five years previously. It was all still there: neither better nor worse, just as the other place used to be. And this came as a surprise not only because I didn't know how much I had retained in my mind while believing it had gone forever, but also for a less private reason. After the last five years of what had appeared, both to the outsider and to those living in the United States, to be years of slow cataclysm—five years of war, of racial upheaval, of "youth revolution," of disaffection on an unprecedented scale, of crime, of apocalyptic talk—there it all was, unmoved, with all its blight and disorder, its wealth of material goods and its technological assertiveness, its unkempt air of randomness and provisionality.

What a truism, you may say. What a discovery! It needs no Columbus to come via Air Canada and Eastern Airlines to tell us *that*. No doubt. I take the point. Indeed, I intend not to let it go. When what has remained essentially unchanged is what I have described, then to record its continued existence is no great pleasure. Yet the sheer stubborn obduracy of what is, is something that Americans themselves are in the habit of trying to deny or pretend away; they have no real belief in the ineluctability of consequence. (Thereby, paradoxically, they reveal themselves to be in the grip of a peculiar American continuity of spirit; but of that more a little later.) One result is that almost anything can be mucked up by anyone, because in theory it can always be replaced by something better. This attitude is obviously good for business. But it isn't only the businessmen who benefit. As I walked about some of the more hideous suburban sections of the city, or rode in a bus down that never-ending main street, it occurred to me with particular force how many of the more hectic things radical Americans say about their country nowadays are merely the expression of a feeble wish, masking itself in force and aggression, that the world

would simply go away; thaw and resolve itself into a dew; vanish like a dream.

It has no intention of doing so. "The world as it stands is no illusion, no phantasm, no evil dream of a night; we wake up to it again and again forever; we can neither forget it nor deny nor dispense with it." Thus an American writer who (it is true) fled his country to live in England. There isn't a clapboard hamburger stand or a discarded refrigerator lying like a mammoth's tooth in the grass of an empty lot that is obligingly going to dissipate itself into so many invisible, inoffensive molecules. We have learned that apparently not even the hydrogen bomb—and which of us hasn't had a heady, swimmy, tight feeling of elation and excitement at the thought of it!—is going to satisfy our depraved taste for absolute transformations, for ultimates. How much less then should we expect to be obliged even by the burdens of an overcomplicated technology, or the terrors of urban rioting, or random crime and violence, or the cannibalistic unreality of the life of the media; let alone by merely hopeful invocations of "breakdown," "falling apart," and "disintegration."

Anyway, I must confess that when all the aesthetic shudders appropriate to the townscape had been shuddered, it remained for me the source also of an oddly fugitive, oddly cheerful kind of self-recognition. Within it, as nowhere else, I knew just how haphazard my own life was, how full of needs, and how perfectly dispensable. The city told me so at every random corner. It was nothing to be ashamed of.

AN ENCOUNTER. I was standing at a bus stop with a young woman, a student, in a part of the city I had never been in before and would never have occasion to revisit. Sunday afternoon. It was raining steadily; the air was warm; from somewhere behind them, the sun burnished the moving clouds. Around us were a few empty lots and many obscure, slatternly storefronts. All the businesses were closed for the day, except for a filling station and a tiny bar with a neon sign for beer in its window. The surface of the road was corrugated and potholed; water lay in every depression; churned-up mud besieged the paving of the curb from all sides. A traffic light hanging over an intersection went unendingly through its changes of color though there was practically no traffic on the road. But every now and again a car would be caught by a red light, and come to a stop with a conversational babble from its wheels on the uneven road.

Despairing of a bus or taxi ever passing, I went to the garage, followed by my companion, and entered the glassed-in cubicle to be found in all such places. A reek of old oil; a blackened floor; greasy clipboards and advertisements for tires and spark plugs hanging on the walls. Four men,

three of them white, were standing about a table. All the men, except the youngest, had their bellies hanging over their belted trousers. I asked them how far it was to the campus.

"Oh, three, four miles, at least. It's quite a ways."

The black man, who was much the biggest of them, ran his eye over the dripping pair of us. "Well—" he said; then hesitated; then made up his mind. "I'll take you. I'm going downtown. I can go that way."

I knew enough about the geography of the city to know that downtown and the campus were in almost opposite directions from one another. So I demurred politely. Whereupon the small, moustached, blue-shirted man who had answered my first question, and who had an air of authority over the others, cut in abruptly.

"It's all right," he said. "You can go with him. He's trustworthy."

It was quite clear what he meant. So clear that neither I nor my friend had anything to say. Nor had the black man, who looked at me from his height with a distant, patient expression of humiliation. Again, the white man offered us his assurance.

"You'll be all right. You can ride with him."

The black man finally stirred. "You wait in my car. I'll be out in a minute. It's the yellow Chevy."

So we left them and waited in the padded cell of his Chevy. When its owner joined us, he made an embarrassed attempt to restore his dignity in his own eyes and ours. "I like to help people out. The only trouble is nowadays, you can't be too careful just who you help." In other words, I was quite as capable as he of being a gun-carrying menace, my white skin and female companion notwithstanding.

After all that had passed, it somehow seemed appropriate that we eventually had to walk in the rain, anyway. The car wouldn't start. "That's why I brought it here," the driver cried in despair, hitting his hand on the steering wheel. Only then did I realize that he was a customer, not an employee, of my blue-shirted guarantor. We left the four of them in heated altercation under the upraised hood of the car. We had paddled the length of only the first three blocks of our hike when my companion's sandals disintegrated; the water had simply washed the glue out of them.

THERE IS a characteristic glance that people in the United States exchange when one approaches another unexpectedly. I had caught it in that garage. There is too much anxiety in it to call it a look of challenge. Rather, I might have discovered them in something underhanded; they might have surprised me in it; for a charged, blank moment, infinitesimal and protracted, *neither of us knows* who has really caught out whom. So there is always a special element of relief when the encounter does not lead to accusation and coun-

ter-accusation; and this relief colors the mixture of informality and friendly concern that are the usual consequences of such meetings.

During my visit to the United States I came across little of the surliness of manner that I'd been warned had spread everywhere since my last visit. On the whole, people were pleasant and obliging; and this was true both of blacks and whites. Clearly, American friendliness had not disappeared or broken down entirely. As for my commercial dealings, the men and women behind shop counters, or in restaurants, or at the other end of telephone lines, worked a great deal harder—that is, they seemed to take their work more seriously, on its own terms—than their equivalents in England generally do. American energy, on that level, had not lapsed into insolence and indifference. Again, although the natives complained bitterly about the standard of their public services—the telephones, the buses, the clearance of rubbish—they seemed to work efficiently enough in the city I was visiting; they were not noticeably worse, at any rate, than those I had become accustomed to on this side of the Atlantic.

Little things? Not worth writing about? It is perhaps a symptom of our disorder that we are inclined to think of them as such. We are snobs, as well as opportunists, in our armchair pursuit of ultimates. Against many memories of kindness and consideration from strangers, I know of no way of “balancing” the recollection of police vehicles discharging tens of helmeted, revolver-carrying, baton-brandishing police into the main street at dusk, the haphazard buildings around them merging into the night and the whirling neon signs growing sharper with every moment that passed, while a band of black youths retreated defiantly two, three, then four blocks down the street, leaving the town-center, going out of sight. I had no idea what the incidents were that the police had come out to suppress by the sheer weight of their numbers and the display of their weaponry. So far as I could see, no arrests had been made.

Off the streets; and on to the campus. . . . That appeared to be a longer-term approach to the problem of preventing trouble before it occurred. I was surprised to see how large, relatively speaking, were the numbers of poor, black students who had been brought on to the campus under various emergency schemes of educational advancement. Five years previously such a class of students had barely existed. Now they were all over the place, and boisterous and assertive in their demeanor with one another (though not with the white students, or in the lecture rooms). The white students, in response, were generally careful neither to compete with them in their noisiness, nor ever to express disapproval, of even the most polite or delicate kind, of anything the black students did. When the white students made their noise, they did it separately, elsewhere.

So there remained a space between the two groups that nobody acknowledged to be there, and that hardly anybody really tried to cross. It was a way of dealing with a situation that was complicated for all involved. No one I spoke to seemed all that hopeful about the eventual success of the experiment, academically; and the rather hollow hullabaloo from some of the black students suggested to me that they also had their deep doubts on that score. But no one thought of going back on the policy, either. It was noticeable, for example, that when the campus crime problem was spoken of, people made an effort—and it took an effort, in view of the evidence—not to link it explicitly with the university's admission policies.

SOME time ago I attended a conference on literary and cultural topics at which a majority of the participants were Americans. In the course of the conference many apocalyptic predictions were made (sometimes with evident relish) about the future development of American culture. But a tacit assumption of several of the speakers was that in talking about the culture of the United States, they were talking about culture everywhere. Indeed, when one English member of the conference quietly remonstrated with his American colleagues—“Our past was different from yours, our present is different from yours, and there is every likelihood that our future will be different from yours”—this modest observation was greeted by some of his listeners with unconcealed disdain.

Everything, it seemed, could be said about the United States—but not that. No Declarations of Independence by upstart cultures elsewhere were to be permitted. And this, if you please, from disaffected Americans; anti-American Americans; Americans who had washed their hands of their country's foreign adventures and the imperialism of its soldiers and business barons! It was an instructive moment, and a depressing one. Even the relish with which it was announced that the traditional modes of cultural discourse were finished, dead, *kaput*, revealed an incurable, depressing, American optimism, though of a perverse kind. We may not know where we're going, it seemed to declare, but look how fast we're traveling, faster than anyone's ever gone before, to a destination that will surely be amazingly different from anything any human has ever experienced, altogether new, modern, unconditioned. . . .

A year later, recalling those debates, I looked out from my ninth-story window in one of the campus apartment houses, across a busy four-lane highway, on to a golf course where the well-nourished, tartan-capped businessmen of the city padded about with their clubs and little carts. Others practiced archery on a strip of grass near the road, using tall bows of viciously flexed blades of tensile steel, painted in vivid colors. Immedi-

ately below, a student or two sometimes lay on the campus lawns, but the spaces were too wide and the apartment houses too high to encourage such pastoral pursuits; generally the students preferred to sprawl about on the steps directly in front of their dormitories or the student union building. In the background, beyond the steel huts and parking lots, were two enormous gray hospitals blocking the horizon; one of them was a veterans' hospital, reputedly filled with wounded men from Vietnam.

It was a forbidding view; there was nothing unconditioned about it. It was enough to remind one that only the dead are unconditioned; and even then they remain among the conditions governing the living. The Americans I saw going about their leisure or business were surely as much in the grip of their past as any other people. Yet that grip showed its mark not only in what they had created around them, but also in the delusion that they may be able to realize, or at least have a duty to aspire toward, an unconditioned future.

It is a strange trap for a people to have found itself in. Without some such belief—without an assertion of will to the effect that a man or a nation are what they declare themselves to be—the country could not have come into existence; it could hardly exist today, over so huge an area, with so diverse a population, so fiercely competitive a system, and so relatively few shared traditions of civility. With it, even those tartan-capped businessmen, canny enough though they may be in their assessment of their day-to-day chances, seem doomed to a measure of megalomania on one side and a corresponding measure of cyn-

icism on the other. They know the future to which they're committed to be a phantom state; yet they cannot live without it. Those, precisely, are the conditions given to them by history.

THE summer school came to its end. I gave my final seminar on the later novels of Dickens, and held the last, laborious, therapeutic session over my students' stories and autobiographical fantasies. Time to go home. But first a weekend with some friends in the country: suddenly I found myself among placid, handsome farmlands—amazingly empty of people to one more accustomed to the English countryside; and amazingly silent to one who had not become accustomed, over the previous few weeks, to having an ever-busy highway outside his window. Then a bus ride to New York City, and the last leg of the journey. At evening the bus crossed the mudflats of New Jersey, where small industrial plants rose forever out of tracts of pallid clay, and marooned diners and liquor stores shone bleakly, looking already as though it were four o'clock in the morning inside them.

The lights of the city came up on the horizon: another spread of stars in another sky. They drew nearer; the buildings closed in; the bus banked and lurched like an airliner descending. Far below, across a huge oblong plaza that was vaulted and floored with lights and obscurity, dark patches moved, joined others, and parted from them, as if a segment of the earth's surface had been cut away to reveal some secret, maleficent process. It was the toll at the entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel. Now gliding, now straining at bends, we went down to it and into the city.

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Walking Distance

A Story

Norma Rosen

"Do you know the joke about Jews in foreign places?" Haskell says to his wife.

"Tell me."

"One of the first things the Jew does is to find the local synagogue. There he sees other Jews still studying the Law. He is overjoyed. Then he remembers he can't stand to be with them. He rushes out into the world and worldly pursuits with renewed purpose."

"Good joke. Are you telling me for amusement or information?"

"Both, I suppose."

"What information are you telling me?"

"I think I'm going to be one of the Jews inside the synagogue for a change."

(Silence.)

"Well?"

"Are you sure that's not the part that's the joke?"

* * *

"THE more mechanized the world becomes, the more precious walking distance is," Haskell says to his wife.

"That depends on what's in walking distance, doesn't it? And what about, 'A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?'"

"My God, where did you dredge that up from? Anyhow, it ought to be, 'A man's reach should not exceed his walking distance, or how will he remember his humanity?'"

"His humanity?" asks Haskell's wife.

"His earthliness."

"What do you mean, earthliness?"

"How will he know what the limitations of the human body are for?"

"What are they for?"

Phoebe and Haskell do not as yet know anyone in the city of Boston, to which they have recently moved from New York. This dialogue they are having is the only one in their lives at present and they are making the most of it.

NORMA ROSEN is the author of two novels, *Touching Evil* and *Joy to Levine!*, and of a short-story collection, *Green*. She is currently a fellow of the Radcliffe Institute. The present story is a section from a novel-in-progress.

"Remember Tolstoy's story about a man who walked around a rich field? Every corner he could reach before sunset was supposed to mark off the land he could keep. To get back to limitations is to earn one's inheritance."

"As I remember it, the man died at sunset. So goodbye land and life together. I think Tolstoy was more interested in pointing out man's mortality than in enriching the walking-distance concept."

"Never mind the author's moralizing. It sank into its own grave. But the excitement and beauty of that walking scene!"

* * *

"LATE! Bed!" Haskell says to his wife.

"How can it be late? It's Friday."

"I'm walking to the early service at the Orthodox synagogue in the morning."

"You're joking."

"You think I can't make it?"

"I mean about walking to *synagogues*. Suddenly you've been going, haven't you? Three Saturdays, three synagogues. First Conservative, now Orthodox. You're really working your way back."

"The kids watch TV anyway. You like to sleep late. I'll be home by the time you've finished brunch."

"But why now, suddenly? How come?"

"I'm curious. Also it restores something to my Saturday mornings. It brings back my childhood Saturdays."

"Why here in Boston is what I mean? You weren't that curious in New York or that much in need of having your childhood Saturdays restored. Why here?"

"There are so many of them. And they're all here—in walking distance."

"Do you mean that? Do you mean you have to go because they're there? Like Everest?"

"You take Yoga on Beacon Street because you can walk there and not have to drive on icy roads."

"But I'm not going to become a Hare Krishna girl."

"What are you afraid I'll become?"

"Religious."

* * *

HASKELL and Phoebe had been expected by their New York friends (and they had expected themselves) to move to Cambridge. There was the notion of the literary life extending from "Cambridge to Cambridge."

But times and dollars have changed. A Cambridge house bought in 1940 for thirty-thousand dollars now brings a hundred thousand. Cambridge houses in the Harvard-Radcliffe compound are, for the most part, fenced in by head-high split-post fences, and well they might be. Urban blight, filthy streets, crime, bad public schools, nonexistent snow removal (in no particular order of occurrence or importance, but each one probably feeding into all the others) are the dreary story of Cambridge now. Except for those who live behind the split-rail fences and who send their children to the Brown & Nichols School, the Shady Hill School, the Foxcroft School, or to any of the other costly private ones.

"We're not going to waste even one minute, are we," Haskell says to his wife, "lamenting the obvious fact that we can't afford. . . ."

"—and nobody like us can either. . . ."

"—to rent or buy a Cambridge apartment or house inflated to triple price. . . ."

"—and to send our children to private schools as well!"

"Yes," says Phoebe to Haskell and Haskell to Phoebe, "we are."

* * *

HASKELL and Phoebe rent a place in Brookline, which has the hateful reputation of being the stamping ground of rich Jews but which is, in fact, the home of far more low- and middle-income Jews than rich ones and far more nearly indigent old Jews than anything else.

The rich ones, of course, occupy the ostentatious top-of-the-hill places in the "estate sections" of Fisher Hill and Chestnut Hill. The huge baronial set-ups built for baronial-sized families and household staffs hump heavily on either side of Route 9 like dinosaurs that can't make it to the last mudhole.

An agent tells Phoebe that many of them go for less (a ninety-thousand-dollar bargain!) than the more modest fence-enclosed houses in the Harvard-Radcliffe compound that have been declared by tacit agreement king of the housing beasts.

So much for taste, aesthetics, and the golden mean of Cambridge. If Santayana wanted to live there now he would have to become a nose-and-throat man.

Boston and its environs are full of high-status hilltops. Beacon Hill, Chestnut Hill, Fisher Hill—and even the modest Coolidge Corner section of Brookline where Phoebe and Haskell live divides itself into houses "on the hill" and "at the bottom of the hill."

The origins lie perhaps in the early bad habits

of citizens who chucked garbage and excremental slops from windows, to the inconvenience of those below. Downhill and down river were the worst places to be, and the pit of the theater in Shakespeare's time—now our "orchestra" section—could be endured only by the coarse.

Phoebe concludes that Boston, which maintains this old form of status, is generally on a lower level in the scale of social evolution, assuming that social evolution itself resembles the shape of a hill.

By comparison with Boston, New York City, especially Manhattan, with its flat, gridiron layout of North, South, East, West, is a positive mandala of order, reflective of the vast, equal fields of heaven. Park Avenue, for all its posh expensiveness, is no nearer park or river or sky than Amsterdam Avenue. And although the land rises naturally toward Harlem and Washington Heights nobody makes anything of it.

* * *

"I LIKE Coolidge Corner," Haskell says to Phoebe. "I like Harvard Street. All the shops in walking distance. Since we have to live in Boston, this little urban pocket of Brookline suits me fine."

"Yes, we go for walks just like on the West Side of Manhattan. We come back with bags of bagels, poppy-seed Danish, slices of almond cake. Tell me," Phoebe says to her husband, "where is New England? What is this peculiar fate that the minute I reach out to touch America, lands me among Jews?"

* * *

A LITERARY friend sends a letter.

"Now that it's gotten really cold in New York (you know that rotten, damp, break-your-bones cold), I think of you in the sparkling New England winter night. I think of you breathing in the Boston still redolent of James and Santayana and all the Lowells."

"I'm going to write her," Phoebe says to her husband, "that it is the coldest recorded January in one hundred years here. That I can't find my way to Cambridge because I'm scared to drive on all the snow and ice. I'm going to write her that what I'm breathing in is the Boston of Peretz. I'm going to write and describe our street of two-family houses and who rents the apartments in them—a few Israeli families with small children in which one or both parents are completing engineering studies at MIT, similar families from Korea completing medical studies. But mostly the elderly refugees from Europe of thirty years ago, and the elderly refugees from the slums of Dorchester and Mattapan of five or six years ago, who moved here because of all the synagogues in walking distance.

"'Dear Sophie,' I'll write to her, 'Peretz did not write amusingly like Sholem Aleichem about uneducated Jews whose native wit and wisdom brings

tears of joy to our eyes, but about educated, aspiring Jews, artists and scholars—tripped up, held down, imprisoned by the circumstances of their Jewdom. A musical comedy will not be made of the work of Peretz.' That's what I'll write her."

"Yes, write it," Haskell says to his wife. "Write, write! You're a writer, aren't you? For God's sake, then, write!"

* * *

"IT's becoming a ritual in itself," Phoebe says to her husband. "How long do you intend to keep this up? Saturdays in the synagogue? The family abandoned? Oh, no, not that! That's not what Saturdays are for!"

"What are Saturdays for?"

"They're for going to the Haymarket to bring home the week's groceries. Saturday is for straightening everybody's desks so they can get to work again on Monday. And for clearing off the dining table that has become everybody's desk. Saturday, when husband and wife work, is for family-affairs-mending, bicycle-riding with your children. Not for synagogues! My God, not for synagogues!"

"What I hear in all this is that you do consider yourself a woman who works. Well then, work! Work!"

* * *

"THE point is," Phoebe says to her husband, "if you were going to become a religious Jew, why you didn't become one before we got married? Or in New York, when we lived in New York all those years."

Haskell shrugs. Phoebe notices that when he wants something he does not express himself directly about it. Surprising to notice this for the first time after ten years of marriage. Is this the first time he's wanted something she's afraid of? She has always thought him open.

"Hell—we sample everything else in the area," Haskell says to his wife. "Baskin and Robbins ice cream, McDonald's hamburgers. You want to take the children to the Freedom Trail in Boston, the Witch-hunting Trail in Salem, and every other thing that's here. Why make a deliberate detour around the synagogues?"

Hillel, Young Israel, Isaiah, Avodah, Ohavei Shalom, Havurat Shalom. . . . Phoebe can't keep up with the names. Synagogues as numerous as grasses, as subtly differentiated as wildflowers.

A Reform rabbi can show the greatest individual variation. He can be learned in Talmud, or know just enough to get by. Or he may be a Reform rabbi who intends to "reform" Reform and put back the Hebrew and the ritual and the swaying, genuflecting praying (let the Catholics see who the mother of their God really was!).

At their worst, the old Orthodox *shuls* may be sparsely filled only with old men who mutter

through their prayers, communing with their dead, films already over their old eyes.

Phoebe has no Hebrew. At school she learned French. She imagines Haskell's Saturday mornings as being like a trip to a foreign country where he converses with the natives and comes back refreshed. For two or three days after these Saturdays, Haskell hums melodies. The prayers themselves are songs.

"The poetry is in the Hebrew," he tells Phoebe. "Those translations in the Union Prayer Book are like Dick and Jane versions approved by the New York City Board of Ed. I don't blame you for thinking there's nothing there. You'd never know it from that Union Prayer Book."

* * *

PHOEBE's mother visits.

Haskell transports them—it is summer—to the Boston Common.

"These are the famous Public Gardens, mother."

"Lovely flowers. They know how to keep a park here. Central Park breaks my heart. I remember when it was a garden spot."

"These are the famous swan boats."

"They're charming. Shall we take the children for a ride, if they are safe?"

"Maybe we can do that later, mother, but Haskell says there's a program in another part of the park, the Greek Grove, that he'd like to take the children to see. So we'll go there first, because he says it's starting soon."

"What is it?"

"I don't know exactly—there'll be music, and dancing. And Haskell says the rabbi plays a guitar."

"Rabbi?"

They are already dancing. The young Jewish students, the Hillel groups, the ones with the militant buttons—a fist and the words "Never again!" and the ones with peace doves.

This part of the park is not so clean. The grass is dusty, with bare spots.

Phoebe's mother is seated on a bench and a dirty newspaper laps at her ankles.

The students are crowded around the speaker's stand, which is the high point of this part of the park—the open, columned kiosk or temple.

Other students are already dancing a *hora*. A loudspeaker blares over the bench where Phoebe's mother sits. She is trying to read the *Wall Street Journal*. She would always be, her posture seems to say, a cool New York matron in her summer black and pearls, no matter where her daughter and her son-in-law bring her.

"Is this what you brought me here for?" her look seems to say to Phoebe.

The students are dressed in a mixture of *shlemiel*-rags and hippie-rags, Indian beaded headbands and crocheted *yarmulkes* bobby-pinned to the backs of messy curls. Leather thongs with

zodiac pendants that beat against the bare chests of the boys, and *mogen dovids* that fly up and down among the ample breasts of the loosely-bloused girls.

Phoebe's children are ecstatic. So much wildness, so many grown-ups going berserk, what could be better? They join the *hora* through the dusty grove, and are lost and have to be searched for.

Sandals, dust, bare feet.

The loudspeaker blares.

Phoebe's mother's look seems to say, "Is this what happens when you move to Boston? Is this why you brought me here to visit you?"

The students in the grove dance and sing of joy and renewal and hope.

Their hope is as nothing compared with the rabbi's. Hope is his message, his life, his middle name.

The rabbi is the son of a famous family of rabbis. He plays the guitar and at the same time he hops on one foot in the columned kiosk, while the loudspeaker blares over Phoebe's mother's head.

He sings his two-note chant:

*Come on everybody, we are going to sing together,
because if we really sing together
we may really begin to feel something
and if we really begin to feel something
then we can move mountains,
we can change the whole world;
let the whole world hear us singing,
let the whole world know how much we care
about it. . . .*

Watching her mother, Phoebe thinks the rabbi's voice sounds as if it is amplified inside a metal bread box.

The students are dancing in rings on the dusty common. Striking up grass. The rabbi in his Greek-columned grove is hopping like a satyr with an itch. Plus a satyr who doesn't know how to use a microphone and whose every breath comes through like the death rattle of a brontosaurus.

Haskell is grinning and sweating. He has just broken out of the *hora*, laughing, to catch his breath.

Phoebe's mother sits stiffly on the bench. Even if not by ideology, then by every felt preference, her mother, Phoebe knows, had opted out of all this long ago.

Her mother has been true to her own early dreams. To be born in America, first-born of immigrant father and mother, meant to grasp the freedom to disaffiliate. America meant an open world! Why be parochial? Why stick timidly to the idea of loyalty to the accidentally born-into tribe?

Not by ideology but by every felt preference, her mother opted for one world. Alas for the one world!

Several shakes of the kaleidoscope later and what does the lens-gazer see? Lenses, telescopes,

observatories and their instruments, great Palomar, numberless Galileos, and heaven itself, all burned to ashes. One Jewish Holocaust. One State of Israel. Disaffiliation is no longer a positive thing, but a void, an area of neglect, an omission, an undeveloped aspect of self.

"Let the whole world hear us *singing*," chants the rabbi who is hopping up and down and breathing heavy blasts into the microphones with his two-note melodic line, ". . . and God's work will be done if only people will *hear* the *singing*, and people *will* hear the *singing*, and all together we can save the *wooooooooooorld*. . . ."

What has never been expressed in words can never be refuted by words. Early loyalties, feelings, beliefs, aversions, longings, all swirl around Phoebe's mother like so much solar dust—impalpable, yet as real and near-visible as the ring that swirls around Saturn.

Isolated like a planet within the orbiting particles, her mother sits in her summer-black city dress with pearls, surveying, shocked, over the top of her *Wall Street Journal*, the assembled Jews cavorting on the dusty grass in the Greek Grove of the Boston Common.

Haskell's walking distance has walked Phoebe's mother back through time. And she shows, by the trembling of the newspaper in her hands, how outrage is never armor enough.

* * *

PHOEBE thinks that the best thing would be for her to balance her husband's walking-distance goals with her own "too-far-to-walk-to" goals. She would like to find something that requires traveling a daily distance to. In New York she was a writer; here, in unfamiliar surroundings, she does not write. In this college-infested area of New England, it is natural to think of adding on a degree.

There has been much talk in newspapers and journals about universities without walls, but so far every university which has sent her a catalogue demands the full paraphernalia of matriculation. Demands, also, full-time commitment—no part of her time left to offer to children or to writing, should the impulse move her again.

She is forced to resort to walking-distance explorations herself.

The one historic non-neighborhood thing in the neighborhood is the Kennedy house, on Beales Street. John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born in that house.

Phoebe walks there with the children after school. They take turns pressing the button in each room and Rose Kennedy's voice comes on, patiently explaining the origins and uses of the contents of each room.

Women's voices, like their figures, are groomed to different ideal proportions in different periods. Rose Kennedy's voice is sweet and deep, as if the speaker were always smiling sadly. Her voice, ap-

parently, has always been like that. Now it is appropriate to her life.

The last room of the house is the kitchen. Beyond that is a small yard—all that is left of the original Kennedy land.

Mrs. Kennedy's last recorded comment is, "We were very happy here, and although we did not know about the days ahead, we were enthusiastic and optimistic about the future."

Phoebe goes back to the house many times, alone. Because it is there, within walking distance, she visits it over and over, trying to see in the beautiful laces and silver sets of the downstairs, and the flowered bedrooms upstairs, something about life and time, her country's sorrows, displacement.

"My husband at that time was president of a bank. . . ." Mrs. Kennedy says in the living room. ". . . A good deal of time reading to the children . . . selected from lists . . . the Women's Industrial Union. . . ."

In the kitchen, Mrs. Kennedy remarks that she often stopped by, in the midst of errands with her children, at St. Aidan's Church, in walking distance.

In a bedroom she says, "Life was much simpler then. . . ."

In the end, no message, despite the carefully articulated messages on the recordings in each room, no message whatsoever comes to Phoebe from this quadruple-tragedy mother. From the well-appointed Beales Street house, the Kennedy family had moved to another, larger, well-appointed house several blocks away. Then, with the great clan of children, to Riverdale, and finally to the compound in Hyannisport. There, through all the deaths, no chink had showed. Determined, like royalty, not to let grief disarray. Life lived at the side of the grave in unbroken successions of clothes and hairstyles and resorts.

What is a compound but an architectural walking distance? All tears must have been shed in the pacing from mansion to mansion and relative to relative.

Elements of "The Monkey's Paw"—wishes granted in such a way as to bring grief instead of joy. Or like some folk curse: May you be a millionaire and your children be brilliant and may you and your children all live in beautiful mansions in walking distance of each other. And may you walk from mansion to mansion and brilliant to brilliant and weep endlessly for your sorrows.

* * *

A movie at the public, walking-distance library.

A modern poet. Her manner—of one surprised by her own warmth. Her expression alternating between hard bitchy bitterness (talking of what her mother did—humiliations, punishments—her eyes with large, light-colored irises, become crafty, darting out poison, sneaky looks from under her lids) then open, wondering, vulnerable, when she

talks (through her poetry) of the love she is given by husband and children.

She tells how she became a poet—by listening to a literary critic on television (her psychiatrist suggested it) and then slowly, piece by piece, building up her study as she gained confidence. First a bridge table, then a desk, then bookshelves.

A record of Bidú Sayao singing something by Villa-Lobos. Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh, ah-ah-ah-ah.

The poet's eyes fill with tears. "This typewriter only gives me back words. It can't make me cry the way that music does. That music makes me cry. I've lost something! It's something I've lost! I can't get back to it!"

What is it that is lost?

It is in the quality of the song itself, the quality of that womanly voice ranging warmly yet freely, with a terrific range, more birdlike (not in tone but in flight) than human. Yet human. The range of emotions as well? The quarter-tones, peaks, and valleys. The tenderness. The coolness. The soaring, swooping freedom, the freedom. And in a woman's voice!

* * *

SINCE Haskell and Phoebe have moved to this new city, events and people seem to occur against no background. They are aware of experience "happening" in a way they weren't aware of before they moved, when the familiar context had been there to absorb it.

A couple they struck off a pleasant acquaintance with at a department party invite them to dinner with other friends. Phoebe and Haskell wait to meet another couple who will provide some *monde* for the invitation they want to extend to the first couple.

* * *

PHOEBE takes more walks. A woman in one of the houses begins to greet her with recognition. They talk, meet again with husbands in the evening.

The husband is an Old Testament scholar. He tells, with gusto, a story of the time Seventh Day Adventists came to his door. Saying, as usual, "We would like to talk to you about the Bible." Two pious-looking women, clutching New Testaments. With great cheerfulness and enthusiasm, the Bible scholar shouts to them, "Come in! Sit down! By all means! What would you ladies like to know?"

Husband and wife, Bible scholar and Mrs. Bible scholar, they have a special well-met marriage story. He is the son of scholarly, intellectual European Jews, the branch called *misnagdim*—enlightened, rational. She is the daughter of a pious, impoverished family of Hasidim—that branch that produces mystics and wise men in the upper reaches, and superstition and ignorance in the lower, ready prey for the unscrupulous "wonder" rabbi.

Her crowning childhood story:

When she was seven she broke her arm. In the tumult of family life, her mother did not notice, and she herself stoically complained only at times. Came the wonder rabbi to collect his tithes, and notices the little girl holding her arm like so.

"I will cure this little arm," said he. And making a poultice of tea leaves, he wraps the child's arm.

Weeks go by. No better. So this admirable child, saying nothing, walks herself to the nearby hospital (walking distance) where they pronounce the arm broken and say she must bring someone of mature years with her. Home to fetch older brother, back to hospital, arm is set and heals, but always bothers her a bit in the bad weather.

Her husband, disgusted: "Hasidim! The worst misfortune that ever befell Jews. The *zaddik* concept was the worst that ever occurred in Jewish history. Think of all the so-called *zaddikim* who took the money of their congregations and escaped Hitler's camps, while their congregations perished!"

Now the wife must fight back. "But it was a great satisfaction to these people to save their rabbi. To them he was holy, and it would have caused them far more anguish if they thought their rabbi had perished too."

"Ahhhhh!" cries the Bible scholar, working his fingers as if he would have liked to snatch at those doomed to perish and bring them over to safety.

"Charlatans! Charlatans of the worst sort!"

"You simply don't understand the full meaning of their rabbis to those Hasidim!" the wife now cries.

It is a whole metaphysical drama, this attack and defense.

How the intellect of each of them rebounds vigorously from the other! To Phoebe it seems that the wife's memory of her family's religious dupism needed the assaults of the husband. In resisting these assaults, she is forced to search for and recover whatever in the past was good—a clear gain.

They have deftly worked out their dialogue of disagreement and thrive on it. Both have healthy, resilient looks about them.

Phoebe wonders if she and Haskell also, like this admirable couple, can work out a dialogue of disagreement without disagreeableness or rancor.

Phoebe and Haskell move warily around each other, as two strangers do. The move from New York has altered them. Each, by separating from the place, has separated from some part of him or herself that was born of that place and nourished on it. They do not feel they know each other well any more. Each is wondering what new aspect of the other will spring up, a surprise Jack-in-the-box, possibly frightening or ugly, possibly inconvenient.

Everyone knows (or says he knows) that people ought to change and grow, and marriage must give room to that. But a Jack-in-the-box or a Jill-in-the-box is different. A Jack-in-the-box springs out, fully formed, take it or leave it. First it delivers its blow of fright, and then it wobbles at you, *there*, of what further significance?

Haskell is becoming religious. Phoebe is becoming—what? She continues to look around for some new aspect of herself. She doesn't at all see yet what it is she might become.

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Malraux's Fate

Renee Winegarten

IF ONLY Chateaubriand had visited Napoleon in exile on St. Helena, what a book would have resulted! Unlike General de Gaulle, the Emperor was unlucky in not having his free and intimate table talk conveyed to posterity by a great artist. André Malraux, thinking on these lines without false modesty—he had decided well before he was sixteen that he wanted to be a great writer—did not intend to miss his opportunity, and in his most recent book, *Les Chênes qu'on abat . . .* ("Felled Oaks . . ."),* he gives his own recreated or transfigured version of his last meeting with the General at Colombey. The title comes from a poem by one of his much-mentioned authors, Victor Hugo—Malraux is surely one of the greatest name-droppers ever—about the crashing of oaks cut down for the funeral pyre of the hero Hercules. As in all his books, where the personages, whether actual or fictional, end by sounding like Malraux and are preoccupied with his obsessions, the contemptuous and world-weary ex-President inquires with his hand resting on a page of the memoirs he is engaged in writing, "Seriously, Malraux, between ourselves, is it worthwhile?" and Malraux replies, after an apt quotation from the Bhagavad-Gita, "General, why must life have a meaning?" Readers who do not lap this up as Madame de Gaulle's cat Grigi laps cream merit the fate McLuhan reserves for them.

Still, all this lofty chit-chat may seem at first quite a long way from the revolutionary commitment and the burning intensity of *La Condition humaine* (*Man's Fate*) and *L'Espoir* (*Man's Hope*). But is it? Action and the futility of action are constantly juxtaposed and debated in Malraux's work. The quest for meaning and value is desperately pursued in the face of meaninglessness and worthlessness. A recent thesis by Janine Mossuz on *Malraux et le Gaullisme* painstakingly seeks to establish the enduring connection between the ideas of the Gaullist propagandist and Minister and his pre-war attitudes. This work, together with a useful short study by Pol

Gaillard and two new popular biographies, one in English by Robert Payne and the other in French by the journalist Pierre Galante, indicate that public interest in Malraux continues unabated despite the fact that he published his last novel, *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg* (*The Walnut Trees of Altenburg*), in 1943, and has declared that he does not intend to write another.

It is not necessarily as novelist, then, that Malraux fascinates today, though his best-known novels are readily available in cheap editions, and he is certainly read. *La Condition humaine* remains one of the most powerful and impassioned documents for understanding the dreams and temptations of the modern intellectual; while of all the works that came out of the Spanish Civil War (with the possible exception of Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*), *L'Espoir* gives the best idea of what that traumatic experience meant in its early heroic phase. Whatever criticism may be leveled at them, his major novels which once seemed (and indeed were) advanced in their rapid, elliptical, image-flashing, cinematographic technique, have entered history; and one French observer has given him what amounts to the kiss of death for a living author by calling him a great writer of the past.

For Malraux, being a great writer still meant being prophet, seer, and unacknowledged legislator of mankind. It meant shaping one's life and work into a significant legend. But the new French writers are hardly interested in such grandiose ambitions and pass him by, for if he put the "absurd" on the literary map or obliquely questioned the value of literature for its own sake, he did so in a totally different way, based on different assumptions from theirs. His studies on art and civilization, the work of a man largely self-taught, received short shrift from the experts (as opposed to the literary fraternity), and should doubtless be seen as part of the "uninterrupted meditation" on value, on life and death, that has taken various forms, including novels, essays, and "antimemoirs." Deliberately anti-Spenglerian, he is nonetheless imbued with a Spenglerian sense of decline in artistic greatness, in which he himself, ironically enough, is involved.

* This work has not yet been translated into English.

RENEE WINEGARTEN writes regularly in these pages on French literature. Her review of *Cocteau* by Francis Steegmuller and *Professional Secrets: An Autobiography of Jean Cocteau*, appeared in our April 1971 number.

Rather than as novelist, it is as the conspiratorial and committed Byron of the inter-war years and the ministerial Chateaubriand of the postwar period that Malraux engages attention today, emerging as the supreme embodiment of the secret yearnings and dreams of his readers: the intellectual as man of action and man of power. One of Malraux's characters, the elder Gisors in *La Condition humaine*, saw the Nietzschean will to power as the mere intellectual justification of the will to godhead: each man dreams of being god, he said, adding that he dreams of being god without losing his personality. If art was to be a way of challenging and improving upon the botched divine design, action meant not only power *for* others but power *over* others, a means of reassuring oneself of one's own existence.

Now that Malraux is in his seventieth year (he was born in November 1901) and has withdrawn from public life, the time has surely arrived to inquire into his motivation as writer and political figure. From that inquiry some idea might be obtained of the driving forces behind his legendary career, and of the connecting link between ostensibly contradictory attitudes. Such an inquiry might help to illuminate some of the equivocations resulting from an attitude based on lofty scorn for liberalism in the widest sense of the word and for parliamentary democracy in general (not merely as practiced under the Third Republic), with their emphasis on the importance of the individual, individualism being a concept that this Nietzschean elitist has paradoxically ravaged throughout his life.

KOESTLER has related how, approaching Malraux with some trepidation for the first time at Gallimard's in 1934, the already celebrated author of *Les Conquérants* (*The Conquerors*) startled him with the query, "Yes, yes, my dear fellow, but what's your opinion of the apocalypse?" The same element of apparently conscious play-acting, the pleasure of being author, spectator, and actor in his own drama, caught the attention of an eyewitness to his Resistance exploits in the Corrèze. But besides this theatrical or self-dramatizing aspect, the question about the apocalypse shows how, as much in life as in his work, Malraux tends to brush aside what does not interest him. Many have enumerated without much difficulty all that is missing from his novels, including the value of woman (reduced at worst to the role of sexual object and at best to that of mourner of dead heroes) as distinct from the value of man. His art specializes in chiaroscuro: the illumination of selected incidents, figures, and discussions, while the remainder stays in inspissated darkness.

Reticent about his personal life and even today evasive about details of his legendary past that he

could clear up in two seconds if he so wished, he has constantly betrayed the attitude of one who dislikes his own image. "Shifting image of myself, I have no love for you," his alter ego, A.D., wrote with incantatory lyricism to his Chinese friend at the end of *La Tentation de L'Occident* (*The Temptation of the West*), adding of the self-image, "I have given you everything; and yet I know I shall never love you." Loathing his childhood, suspicious of introspection, probings into the psyche, and the hunt for "secrets" so beloved of biographers, Malraux often resembled a gambler with something to hide, dissatisfied with the cards of identity dealt him by fate. He preferred to present, not his given self, but his idea of himself as he wanted to be.

From the beginning, 19th-century individualism, which reached its culmination in Barrès's cult of the ego, seemed to Malraux an exhausted heritage. What he called the bankruptcy of individualism, of all the attitudes and doctrines that exalt the self, is as constant a theme in his writing as existential anxiety inspired by thoughts of death. Yet ironically he set out with this distaste of the private self to create a persona that would be less intolerable to him and that he would impose through an effort of will and energy. It was this element of self-creation that he admired not only in so hollow a hero as Lawrence of Arabia, a model and frequent subject of reflection, but in the charismatic figure of Saint-Just, the archangel of the Terror. Saint-Just's ruthlessness has haunted his own imagination as well as that of the militant Garine in *Les Conquérants*. (Malraux even tried to convince General de Gaulle of the somewhat dubious grandeur of so sanguinary a revolutionary, apparently without much success.) As Malraux expressed it, Saint-Just seems to have had no family, and to present a purely man-made destiny. This appears to be Malraux's ideal—the ideal of an actor who creates a role.

Analyzing the crisis of consciousness of the modern European whom he criticized but could not help resembling, Malraux (through A.D. in *La Tentation de l'Occident*) saw "action" as the key to Western mentality where "being" is the key to the spirit of the East. He wrote there that it is as if for moderns in the West the opportunity alone were lacking for them to perform in the real world the exploits of their dreams, so that they retain a confused impression, not of having performed these exploits but of being capable of doing so. "Pitiful actors" unwilling to relinquish glorious roles, they are creatures within whom there sleeps the "procession of the possibilities" of their actions and dreams.

Here is revealed the dream of action which Malraux will translate into reality, for he is referring as much to himself as to Western man in general. It is of his own disarray at the break-

down of values and lack of a sense of identity that he speaks in terms that embrace his fellow men in the West in the years after World War I. It is his despair, his lucidity or intelligence, his latent power and obsession with the self-creating and self-sustaining dream, myth, or role that stand out for the first time in this book written between 1921 and 1925. When in Delhi many years later, Nehru remarked upon Malraux's latest incarnation as Minister, the latter countered with the charming tall-tale of Mallarmé's cat whom the poet overheard saying to another, "At the moment, I'm pretending to be a cat at Mallarmé's": a revealing reply for a man who in his time has played many parts.

His fondness for the cryptic, gnomic, or portentous remark means that it is not always easy to grasp his intention or the overall structure of his books, yet only from the dialectical juxtaposition of conflicting opinions and scenes does a total impression arise, an impression that often contradicts, emotionally, the logical direction and force of what has been said or done. Thus his is a world where rational discourse, apparently dominant, is superseded by the irrational, by feeling, dream, or myth. Assertion and insight, often dazzlingly brilliant and expressed in lapidary epigram or powerfully hypnotic lyrical rhetoric, obscure the fact that the sequence of an argument is frequently lacking.

As for the characters of his novels, they rarely impress by their individuality, but by their condensed reflections and astonishing actions. Considering his lifelong interest in the visual arts, it is surprising how little visual impact they make as individuals. Each one forms part of a total debate, and collectively they appear as "the procession of the possibilities" of his actions and dreams, his potentialities, some of which he transformed into actuality: the adventurer, the historian of art, the leader of men. Through his very desire to reduce the place of the individual, he shapes his characters into living aspects of a metaphysical discussion about the past, present, and future destiny of man.

He projected this conception onto D. H. Lawrence (as indeed he projects his own standpoint onto all the writers and artists he discusses) when he wrote in 1932 that the author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* "thinks it more important for him to be a man than to be an individual. The preference for difference is thus replaced by the preference for a particular sort of intensity: it is a matter of being a man—to the greatest possible degree." This notion of the precedence of "man" over "individual" stands at the center of his art which contributed its share toward the modern breakdown of the 19th-century novelistic character, and at the center of the varying forms of his political commitment.

MALRAUX began his career unattached and apolitical. His early surrealist writings reveal an imagination haunted by blood, violence, torture, and death, but otherwise give little hint of what was to come. As Walter G. Langlois convincingly showed in his book, *André Malraux: The Indochina Adventure*, it was Malraux's experience of French colonialism which shaped his political outlook between the wars. The modish young surrealist and speculator was brought up short by his first contact with colonial injustice in Djibouti in French East Africa on his way to Cambodia in 1923. His arrest and trial in Pnom-Penh for the theft of Khmer sculptures from the temple of Banteay Srei seemed to him not only unjust, especially as political capital was made out of it, but unspeakably disproportionate and absurd. In 1925 he returned to Saigon, helped to organize the "Young Annam"* movement, and with Paul Monin set up a newspaper, *L'Indochine* (later *L'Indochine enchaînée*), wherein he flayed with heavy sarcasm and mounting indignation the evils of financial corruption and exploitation in the colony. So far he presents a classic case of the conversion of the non-political man of letters to political involvement.

The theme of his journalism was that the colonial authorities were betraying their trust and, significantly, the principles of the French Revolution, in denying proper dignity and opportunity to the Annamites. He advocated Franco-Annamite cooperation and prophesied what would happen if the colonials were not given the education and the responsibilities they deserved. He saw his words go unheeded as exploitation aroused resistance, followed by repression and hideous torture. He left for home in 1926, avowedly in order to make an appeal, over the heads of the governmental authorities, to the French people (whom he regarded as the true source of authority as distinct from the government of parliamentary parties which, along with British imperialism, capitalism, and fascism were to be his *bêtes noires*). Nothing much was heard of this appeal afterward: allusions to the situation in Indochina in the ensuing years became rare. There is a resemblance here to another myth-forging adventurer, Lawrence of Arabia, who scarcely mentioned the Arabs and their cause in his later years.

In the light of Malraux's journalism in Indochina, *La Voie Royale* (*The Royal Way*)—thought to be the first of his Eastern novels to be conceived though the second to be published—is not quite what might have been expected. It has as its central figure, Perken, a Danish adventurer of Lawrentian stamp whose ambition it once

* Annam was that part of French Indochina which was later divided into North and South Vietnam.

was to leave a scar on the map, to carve out a kingdom for himself like Brooke of Sarawak or Mayrena the king of the Sedangs. Indeed Perken and the vanished wild-man Grabot whom he is seeking, in many ways look like typical tough colonial adventurers. Expressed through the fate of these two men is the tension in Malraux between the admired assertion of will power and the awareness of the limitations of the human will. Admiration for courage and heroism is countered by a sense of the vanity of vanities.

The same kind of movement and counter-movement can be found in *Les Conquérants*. Garine, the revolutionary of bourgeois origin, feels no love for the underdogs on whose behalf he struggles, only hatred and disgust for the bourgeoisie. He seeks to escape from an obsessive sense of the sinister and grotesque absurdity and futility of everything into the human (as Malraux was to put it), by the exercise of his will, by ruthless action for a cause that transcends his own ego and his selfish personal interests. Doomed by a consuming sickness, he is contrasted with Mikhail Borodin, the historical figure whom Malraux saw (apparently mistakenly, according to Trotsky) as the professional revolutionary and strict disciplinarian par excellence. Yet in different ways both Garine and Borodin aim to destroy individuality in favor of collective values.

If Trotsky felt that the novel was marred by dilettantism and aestheticism and required a good dose of Marxism, for Malraux (who was never a member of the Communist party) Marxism had to mean the precedence of sublime human values over all other considerations: a means of restoring dignity to the insulted and injured. For him, the revolution was at first a means of escape from the ego into the "virile fraternity," the "brotherhood of arms," and the ideal heroic self-sacrifice epitomized in *La Condition humaine* by Katow giving his cyanide to two comrades and dying a terrible but noble death.

In the late 20's and 30's it was the exaltation of collective values as opposed to selfish individualism that Malraux lauded in Communism. "On the metaphysical level, Bolshevism acknowledges that the highest human values are collective values," he declared in June 1929; while in July 1934 he wrote: "To the bourgeoisie which said: *the individual*, Communism will reply: *man*." What he was beginning to dislike in the Soviet Union in 1934 was not so much the need to dirty one's hands as the lack of liberty for the artist and the doctrine of socialist realism. But in view of his approval of collective over individual values, it is hardly surprising that he could say, at the height of his belief in Stalin's contribution to human dignity, that the Moscow Trials did not detract from the dignity of Communism, any more than the Inquisition detracted from that of Christianity. The struggle against fascism, the Spanish

Republican cause, came before all else: consequently he advised Gide against publishing his criticism of the Soviet Union and said nothing about the purges. When Trotsky complained, Malraux accused him of being more concerned with his personal fate than with the cause.

Either one was the intellectual and the artist, involved above all with truth and complexity, with doubts and nuances, or one settled for action, which was Manichean. In the latter case, one was not playing games, one was fighting to win. That meant violence and discipline, expediency and knowing when to keep one's mouth shut. In order to win, in China, it was necessary to employ the ruthless terrorist. In order to win, in Spain, it was necessary to pass beyond the first euphoric stage of lyrical illusion: the Communist Manuel becomes a revolutionary leader through rigid self-discipline and self-denial, growing progressively less human, until he reaches the point where he refuses to listen to cries of mercy. At this stage, when writing *L'Espoir*, Malraux was torn between the claims of the artist, of "being," and those of "doing," of revolutionary and military ruthlessness, just as he had been fascinated by the adventurer's ruthlessness in Perken or Grabot. During World War II, Father Pierre Bockel was to note Malraux's delight in the ferocity of his men in the Alsace-Lorraine brigade.

UP TO 1936 Malraux had written about action, though his revolutionary experiences (if any) in China remain obscure; but at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War he emerged into the open as a man of action, buying planes and hiring international mercenaries for an independent air squadron which he organized for the Republican government. He took part in over sixty missions and was wounded twice. As far as is known, his previous experience of flying consisted in accompanying Corniglion-Molinier in an aerial search over Yemen for the lost capital of the Queen of Sheba. Malraux's Spanish exploits lasted only five months, from August to December 1936. He left Spain, returning later to make the film of *L'Espoir*. He also traveled and lectured on behalf of the Spanish Republic, appearing as the writer who personified "the conscience of intellectual and fraternal humanity" and hypnotizing his hearers with his fiery eloquence. But already the gap between the reality and the dream of revolutionary action as an escape from the hated self was growing. In the celebrated discussion between Garcia and Scali on the ethics of action in *L'Espoir*, the former remarks that if a man is counting on the revolution to suppress his tragic sense of life, his thinking is all wrong.

Even more remarkable adventures were to follow. World War II found Malraux not in the air force as might have been anticipated, but in the

tanks corps (where his father had been an officer). Taken prisoner, he escaped to the Unoccupied Zone, where he showed no haste to join the Resistance. Various well-known people approached him without success: among them was Sartre, who found him living in lordly style in a villa at Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, expecting Russian tanks and American planes to win the war. Suddenly, in the spring of 1943, he appeared as leader of a private army in the Corrèze. Wounded, captured, forced (like Dostoevsky) to undergo mock execution, he was liberated and went on to victorious battle as commander of the Alsace-Lorraine brigade in 1944. Unlike T. E. Lawrence, and unlike the character modeled on him, Vincent Berger, the finally disillusioned adviser and right-hand man of the Turkish leader Enver Pasha in *Les Noyers de l'Altenburg*, Malraux had at last found his authentic fighting "brotherhood of arms," his own true cause: he had, as he somewhat embarrassingly expressed it, "married France." Henceforward he would be General de Gaulle's man, in turn his propagandist, Minister of Information, and Minister of Culture; and when the General withdrew in 1969, he followed.

MALRAUX conveniently interpreted his allegiance to de Gaulle as fidelity to the principles of the Revolution of 1789. For him, Gaullism was the heir of the Revolution and in particular of the First Republic of Robespierre and Saint-Just. Thus Gaullism was not a program but a movement of "public safety." It inherited the idea of the "one and indivisible nation" and the cry of "the Republic in danger." In visions of apocalyptic doom he saw the state threatened as it was in 1793 by foreign foes, only this time the enemy was the Communists and the apocalyptic savior was de Gaulle.

Doubtless Communism after the Liberation was not what it had signified for the Annamite resistance, nor what it had meant for Malraux himself when he had accompanied Gide to Berlin to try to obtain the release of the same Dimitrov who was now abusing his power. Doubtless Malraux's growing belief that Communism represented the arm of victorious Russian nationalism and imperialism and no longer stood for certain essential collective values, together with his disapproval of the role of the French Communists in the Resistance movement, whom he saw aiming to take power rather than to serve France, contributed to his reversal. But the fact that he regarded General de Gaulle as the descendant of the Jacobins meant that Malraux could feel he himself had not changed: unlike the Russians and the French Communists, his position was still "revolutionary," but in the authentic French sense. He could even tell Claude Mauriac, the son of the Catholic novelist and at that time the General's private secretary,

in 1946, that if only he (Malraux) had met General de Gaulle sooner, the great man would not have had the Left against him. In the same way he could declare that the General could not possibly be a fascist because Malraux, the noted anti-fascist, supported him. It would seem that he had no idea just how much his own changed position had alienated the non-Communist Left.

However, Malraux's dislike of parliamentary democracy had not changed. "What is there in this country at the moment?" he inquired in February 1949. "Ourselves, the Communists, and nothing"—"nothing" being the elected representatives and the legal government. The guarantee of political and intellectual freedom as he saw it was a strong state acting for the benefit of all its citizens. Nor did his sense of expediency vary: one still fought to win and that meant violence. For him, the Gaullist movement was an insurrectionary force and he expected it to seize power by violence. When it proved to be just another political party, he lost interest in it. His personal allegiance was to General de Gaulle who preserved France's honor "like an invincible dream."

For Malraux the anti-individualist, what was always needed for any great action was a sustaining myth embodied in a heroic figure. The Republic was the supreme value for his idealized hero Saint-Just: Malraux wrote in a prefatory essay of 1954 that the Republic was Saint-Just's guiding star, in the way that Lenin's was the proletariat, Gandhi's was India, and de Gaulle's was France. Proud, strong-willed, Saint-Just carried through a legendary action, as de Gaulle, the incarnation of the will to be France, had done. "Nobody at the time of the famous appeal [of 1940] believed he *was* France, least of all himself. He decided to be France." Thus General de Gaulle, through his will power, embodied the national myth and preserved the dreams that had existed long before him. He divested himself of his individuality (Charles) on becoming de Gaulle, the incarnation of the French myth. This view is clearly an extension of Malraux's own self-creating process. Where previously Malraux had attributed to Communism the role of suppressing individualism in the name of higher collective values, now he attributed that role to any powerful collective dream or national myth. It shows how important the urge to quash the individual element is for him, at the same time that he exalts the myth-embodiment individual hero.

It is impossible not to be impressed by Malraux's personal bravery and qualities of leadership, but it is more difficult to admire wholeheartedly the high priest of Gaullism. More than once his official status placed him in an awkward position, when loyalty to the government of de Gaulle required his silence. But then he had often made a virtue of discretion in his fellow-traveling days. Besides, though it is no small

achievement to have beautified Paris by having its monuments cleaned, one cannot help wondering why the author of *La Condition humaine* preferred to deliver funeral orations and organize exhibitions (however splendid) rather than to pursue his own novelistic work; and one can only conclude that he thought literature inferior to ministerial activity.

As Minister of Culture, some of his decisions were questionable, particularly the dismissal of Jean-Louis Barrault from directorship of the Odéon theater during the events of May-June 1968. That Malraux should wish to go down to posterity as the founder of *maisons de culture* or cultural centers in the provinces, while worthy, seems perverse. In all likelihood he did not have any great influence on the shaping of policy. He was a valuable instrument of prestige for the regime, allowed wider scope than Racine and Boileau enjoyed as historiographers of Louis XIV, but fulfilling a similar function nevertheless. Here lies, perhaps, the final irony in this modern intellectual's passion for action and power.

THE young Chinese of *La Tentation de l'Occident* expected that his last view of Europe would be of men trying to preserve "Man" in a world progressively more alien to them, because without this curious justificatory concept, they could not live. And A.D. in the same work spoke of two tendencies, one toward justification and the other toward the utter uselessness of justification. Malraux himself was irresistibly drawn to justification: in an essay on Gide in 1935 he had remarked that modern writers who exert a moral influence are "justifiers," probably envisaging a similar role for himself. The emotional affirmation that Malraux makes in his work—whether he exalts Man, the values of self-sacrifice, courage, dignity, fraternity, the moral victory snatched from defeat, the communication of living and dead through myth and art, in short, all that is contained in the life-affirming

symbol of the walnut trees of Altenburg—has no logical foundation and is precariously asserted or implied in the full knowledge of the counter-tendency of the futility of justification. Such defiant affirmation is ultimately a "mystery" in the religious sense of the word.

For in the world of Malraux, what he calls "transcendence," the sacred, the justifying myth, the context of metaphysics, still count. Though he cannot accept religion, the "higher faith," nevertheless in his world the absence of religion is still felt, whereas in many later writers it is an absence that goes unnoticed. Much of what passes for art today is a studied denial of meaning, not an anguished pursuit of meaning at all costs. Here is the great gulf between the world of Malraux and that of the present day. Malraux can be seen at the decaying end of the humanist line, desperately trying to shore up the wall of humanism while the tide of anti-humanism washes away his efforts.

All the same, it ought surely to be emphasized that what he is proposing tends to sound finer than it really is. One cannot help feeling suspicious of a kind of humanism that persistently reduces the individual who does not transcend himself in the collective idea or who does not embody some inspiring collective myth. Whether in some cases a collective myth might prove equivocally a force for evil as well as good does not appear to enter into his calculations, an astonishing omission in view of the havoc wrought by myth in our own day. But it is not necessary to have recourse to the familiar accusation of fascism to perceive the precariousness of Malraux's position, even if for this convinced anti-fascist, fascism and Communism have been a near thing. His progress shows how dangerous it is to place as he has done the ultimate value and dignity of man in the rare elite, in the abstract or the mythical fraternal mass, instead of founding it more securely upon the needs of each individual human being and the minute particulars of each individual case.

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Counting Jews

Ruth Gay

IN THE summer of 1828, Richard Lander, an English manservant turned explorer, returned to London from Africa bringing back the first definitive report on the course of the Niger. Upon his arrival, he was "met in the streets by a Jew who ran forth and cordially embraced me, asking how I had left our Hebrew brethren in Jerusalem. The fellow, by my beard and singular appearance, had taken it into his head that I belonged to his own fraternity and just returned from visiting the holy city, but being convinced of his ludicrous mistake, my affectionate would-be brother sneaked off without further *palaver*ing." Thus Lander, in his serene and lofty contempt unaware that he was brushing aside, with his questioner, a tradition then already 2,500 years old.

Since the 6th century B.C.E., when Nebuchadnezzar's transport of Judean prisoners had established the first Diaspora in Babylon, Jews have been inquiring after one another. The steady interchange of messengers, goods, and learning that followed between Babylon and Jerusalem was only the beginning of a persistent tradition of which Lander's questioner was a classic representative. Emblematic of the hope and interest with which Jews have looked upon the traveler is the transformation of Elijah from the severe and often heartless prophet of the Scriptures into his more widely cherished folk character. The folk Elijah is not only the harbinger of the Messiah; he appears also from time to time to redress wrongs, to reward the right-

eous, and to comfort the injured. One of the most delicious elements of these folk tales is that he first appears as the travel-stained wanderer who then requites the charity of the humble—a woodcutter or a fisherman—with miracles and wonders. So long as the mores of Jewish life in Eastern Europe remained intact, the messenger, the visitor, the guest, continued to occupy a place of honor. A visitor to a synagogue was complimented with a place at the reading desk, and the stranger who arrived in a synagogue on a Friday afternoon was addressed ceremoniously with the Hebrew word for guest, while the householders vied for the honor of being his host. The householders were, of course, performing a prescribed meritorious act; but they were also satisfying an insatiable interest in the fate of Jews wherever they might be, however unrelated to themselves. Since the first Diaspora, Jews have never shaken off the sense of one people—one people dispersed, but nonetheless to be accounted for. The traveler, then, was always being asked to give an account not only of himself but of whatever Jews he had met on the way.

Travel has been, as we know, a constant, if not always voluntary feature of Jewish life. And the voluntary voyages were generally either business trips or pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Until recent times, few merchants of whatever religion could safely consign a shipload of goods to foreign ports without accompanying it personally. Merchants, however, tend to confine their observations to their ledgers, leaving us, thereby, the poorer. Those who could afford to choose their time, like Judah Halevi, would leave a pilgrimage to the end of their lives and their

letters, like his poems, are ecstatic accounts of the happy realization of their desires. But Christians also made pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Christian merchants also accompanied their bales of goods across the world and into hazardous adventures in search of markets and profits. The Jewish travelers share the characteristics of their fellow Europeans; they write little of themselves, but largely of what they have seen; they comment copiously on God's mercy which delivers them from storms and misadventures with men and beasts, and they are as eager to relate marvels as they are to tell the number of days for the journey between Aleppo and Baghdad. Jews did one other thing. They counted Jews.

In every age, whether merchant, pilgrim, or adventurer, the Jewish traveler includes his litany of numbers, a habit which cannot be understood on grounds of utility alone. Or, at least, it can only partially be understood in that way. As traders during much of their history in Europe, Jews found such news indispensable. But Jews who never hoped to trade more than a few yards of cloth in the next village inquired as eagerly after conditions in Syria as the merchant planning his next cargo. In the 10th century, when Hasdai Ibn Shaprut was physician and vizier to the Caliph of Cordova, no problem interested him more, and he questioned every embassy arriving at the court of his master for fresh information. When he discovered that there was a kingdom of Jews ruled by a Jewish king on the shores of the Black Sea—the land of the Khazars—he arranged to send a letter through an elaborate chain of envoys to this king. In it, after the usual opening compliments, he soon comes to the point: "Let not my Lord take it ill, I pray, that I enquire about the number of his forces (may the Lord add unto them . . .)! My Lord sees that I enquire about this with no other object than that I may rejoice when I hear of the increase of the holy people."

An illustrious Italian rabbi of

RUTH GAY, the author of *Jews in America*, is currently at work on a book about English travelers to the Middle East.

the 15th century, Obadiah da Bertinoro, is no different. Writing a letter to his father about a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he interweaves his pious reflections at every stage with the refrain of: "Palermo is the chief town of Sicily, and contains about 850 Jewish families. . . . Messina is not so large as Palermo, neither has it such good springs. . . . There are about 400 Jewish families. . . . Not many Jews have remained in Rhodes; altogether there are twenty-two families, all poor, who subsist with difficulty on vegetables."

ONLY a handful of the narratives of the early Jewish travelers survive, and their motives are often as mysterious as themselves. When Leopold Zunz, the German-Jewish theologian, made a laborious study of Jewish travelers in 1841, he was able to find only 140 from biblical times to his own day who had left even "traces" of geographical studies. The most justly famous of these is Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela who set out from his native city in Spain in 1160, traveled to Asia Minor, India, possibly to China, and returned home via Arabia thirteen years later to write some hundred pages of laconic, businesslike prose. "Two days to Melfi in Apulia, the Pul of Scripture, with about two hundred Jews of which R. Achima'ats, R. Nathan, and R. Tsadok are the principal. One day's journey to Ascoli, the principal of the forty Jews who live there are: R. Kontilo, R. Tsemach his son-in-law, and R. Joseph. . . ."

There are few who would read Benjamin today for amusement, although he intersperses his jogging prose from time to time with descriptions of towns and people, or with legends and accounts of local belief. Whatever his literary merit, or lack of it, his dry, sparse sentences have yielded unintended riches to specialists since his is one of the rare surviving accounts of the medieval world. Although Benjamin is the first Westerner to report on China, it seems doubtful that he ever actually got there, or even past Baghdad. In this Benjamin betrays himself by his own scrupulous recording of the names of the principal Jewish household-

ers wherever he stops. These lists cease after his account of Baghdad, and thereafter he seems to rely on hearsay. But the fact that it is *contemporary* hearsay has its own historical interest. Archeologists have profited most from his account. His report that the remains of Nineveh lay across the river from Mosul, for instance, was a valuable hint to 19th-century excavators who found there only overgrown grass mounds. In sifting Benjamin's text the geographer learns what the world looked like in the 12th century, the anthropologist the customs of the peoples of Mesopotamia, the historian what Western Europeans knew or believed of other nations. Of Russia, for example, Benjamin writes, "The country is very mountainous and full of forests. . . . In winter the cold is so intense that nobody ventures to leave his house in consequence of it; so far the kingdom of Russia." And since he visited and inquired after Jewish communities with such care, we can catch a glimpse of how Jews lived in Europe and Asia Minor in the 12th century. Invariably, his words of praise are "learned," "wise," "pious." He lists seven cities of Germany with the comment, "all these cities contain many rich and learned Jews." He praises Paris because "it contains many learned men, the equal of which are to be met with at present nowhere on earth; they employ all their time upon the study of the law, are hospitable to travelers, and on friendly terms with all their Jewish brethren." From all this prodigious account, however, Benjamin himself is missing and we see him, and for centuries those who come after him, only in stylized postures of prayer or thanksgiving.

Ultimately the traveler sees and brings back what his compatriots want to hear. Jews, too, have wanted to hear different things in different times. The taste for miracles is a fluctuating one, but in these early travels, business affairs and religious history, the marvelous and the literal, are inextricably joined. The account of Rabbi Pethachiah of Regensburg, who made a journey to the Middle East at the end of the 12th century, begins very properly with his pur-

pose: "And Rabbi Pethachiah went round all the countries as far as the river Sambatyon, and all the news and all the wonderful things of the Holy One, praised be He, which he saw or heard, he wrote down as a memorial to tell it to his people, the house of Israel, thus to bring hidden things to light." The difficulty here is that the river Sambatyon is a mythical river beyond which the Ten Lost Tribes are presumed to have been banished. According to legend its sacred nature is shown by the fact that it runs swiftly for six days, but ceases to flow on the Sabbath. (The only dissenting voice, from Pliny to the Talmud, is that of Josephus who, with his talent for perversity, has the schedule reversed! According to him, the river runs on the Sabbath and rests on the other six days.) When Pethachiah reaches Baghdad, where he visits the tomb of Ezekiel, he is told that he is forty days' journey from the river Sambatyon. Real camels traveling in real time (or is forty a mystical number?) will take him to a magical river. Unfortunately he decides not to make the journey.

RABBI Pethachiah represents a strand in Jewish travel writing that is as persistent as that of the counters, a strand in which the holy and the temporal, the miraculous and the mundane, are indistinguishable. The very antiquity of Jewish history has done much to blur the boundaries of actuality, confusing and combining legend and history into one whole. In reporting the physical relics of this past, the travelers were establishing a continuity as tangible as the numbers they inquired after so tirelessly. The graves of the innumerable learned whose words are studied daily, the monuments of ancient kings whose names reappear rhythmically in the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah, all reaffirm the indissoluble unity of Jewish history with contemporary Jewish life. To a man who reads the Mishnah every day, Judah the Prince (the compiler of the Mishnah in the 2nd century) is as vivid as his neighbor in the synagogue. A visit to Judah's grave is not an abstract act of piety; it is the incorporation of the past into the living present.

The element of the miraculous is no less important than tangible manuscripts and gravestones. It gives license to that sense of wonder that Jews feel about their past, so that in early travel accounts the physical and visible elements of the past shade imperceptibly into the marvelous. A 13th-century rabbi on a mission from Paris to the Holy Land writes: "About three parasangs from Hebron is the stone upon which Abraham sat after he had been circumcised, and people take dust from this stone to heal circumcision." Or later, "Four parasangs from Al-Kufa is the place where Noah entered the Ark. . . ." In the 14th-century a Spanish Kabbalist, Isaac ben Chelo, visits the town of Ethain outside Jerusalem. "One of the keepers told me," he writes, "that every year on the day of the giving of the Law, a voice is heard coming out of the Holy Ark which says, 'Study the Law, O sons of Israel. . . .' This is the voice of Rabbi Simeon who comes back every year into his synagogue."

Yet even these reporters do not neglect the living reality that they find amid these evidences of the past. Pethachiah tells us that Rabbi Judah's descendant keeps a stall in the market, that in Shushan there are two Jews who are dyers, and eight hundred Jews at Nisibis. Isaac Chelo draws up a list of the occupations of the members of the "holy congregation" in Jerusalem.

The archeologists, those modern pilgrims into the past, perform much the same emotional function for the layman as these old travelers. When they discover the copper mines of Solomon at Ezion Geber, his stables at Megiddo, or the wine jug of Jehoiakin, the exiled king of Judah at Babylon, with his name on the seal, they too are establishing a sense of immediacy with the past. In the same way that the Jews of the Middle Ages visited the graves of Abraham or Ezra, modern Jews visit the archeological museums of Israel and experience essentially the same emotion in a new key. With the blessing of science, these artifacts reaffirm as they did for Pethachiah that unbroken bond with remote, but still looming, ancestors. Our investigations are different; the talismans remain the same.

IN ONE surprising episode in the 17th century, this blending of the miraculous with the real, the past with the present, emerged from the dreaming world of the ghetto to have powerful political consequences. In 1644 Antonius Montezinos, a Portuguese Marrano, returned from the New World with a remarkable tale. He appeared before Manasseh ben Israel, the head of the Portuguese-Jewish community at Amsterdam, and other elders to make a sworn statement of his experiences. When he had been in the neighborhood of Quito two and a half years earlier, he had met a people who lived in a remote fastness beyond a river that no one was permitted to cross. They had convinced him that they were Hebrews. Two of the men had recited in Hebrew the *Shema*: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one God. . . ." They also told him, "Our fathers are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Israel," and that they were of the tribe of Reuben, one of the Ten Lost Tribes. Montezinos himself, poor wretch, went back to South America six months later and died shortly thereafter.

Manasseh let the statement lie neglected for several years until he became engaged in a scheme to urge the readmission of Jews to England, and then Montezinos's account suddenly fitted into an elaborate theological argument. In 1650 he published a pamphlet called *Hope of Israel* showing that the redemption of the Jews and the coming of the Messiah were at hand. Since the prophets foretold the end of days when the Jews would be scattered to the four quarters of the earth, he argued that Montezinos's discovery demonstrated the completion of this prophecy. The English Millenarians took up this idea enthusiastically and, in late 1655, Manasseh arrived in England to attend a special conference on the readmission of the Jews. The prospect of large-scale Jewish immigration, however, frightened the soberer elements among the English Puritans, and when the debate began to turn against the Jews, Cromwell adjourned the conference, leaving the question unresolved. In the two years that remained to him, Cromwell, who had been more interested

in the commercial than the theological consequences of readmission, managed only to assure the safety of the handful of Marrano families already in England. The excitement occasioned by Manasseh's interpretation of Montezinos's story subsided almost immediately, and it was not until 1664 that Jews were officially admitted to England.

The search for the Ten Lost Tribes was another aspect of the past that, like the river Sambatyon, bewitched those in the present. As late as the 19th century, a Hungarian Jew named Israel Joseph renamed himself Benjamin II, and departed for a trip to Asia and Africa. He was impelled to this, he wrote, not only by his passion for geography, but above all by his hope to discover the Ten Lost Tribes. Benjamin II is among the last of the visionaries, and his account of his travels which take him as far as Canton is a curious mixture of references to the Scriptures, pious exclamations, and sober ethnographical descriptions of the life cycles of Jews in Morocco, Syria, Persia, and elsewhere across the Middle East. In a second trip, which he made to America between 1859 and 1862, he does not mention the Lost Tribes, but in a more scientific vein promises to write nothing less than the "history of the Jews in this land of political and religious freedom." His results, published in two volumes, are indeed the first complete description of the Jewish communities across the continent.

As we move into modern times, the utility of both travel itself and of travel accounts becomes more evident. Travelers are, themselves, emissaries to the communities they are visiting as well as reporters to their own. Until World War II the figures of messengers from Palestine collecting money for educational institutions, for orphanages, for resettlement or retraining schemes were familiar all across Europe and America. Beggars though they may have been, they carried with them the aura of Elijah; the visitor from the Holy Land had a moral authority wherever he was received. The representative of a school took the occasion to lecture givers on the way they were educating *their*

children; those collecting for land settlement reminded listeners of their Messianic hopes; fund-raisers for old-age homes spoke sternly of the commandment to honor one's parents. These were mutually purifying events.

Something important was accomplished by the traveler who went abroad and counted synagogues, people, houses, wealth. He helped his readers to reach out and touch one another in a menacing world. His reports assured them that neither good fortune nor ill is exceptional or lasting. He reminded them of the varieities and possibilities of life. When the great *Jewish Encyclopedia* was published in 1901 one of its most delightful features was the sprinkling of stiff photographs and engravings through its volumes showing "Jews of K'ai-Fung Foo, China," "Jews of Tunisia in Native Costume," "Jewess of Samarcand," "Turkish Jews of the 16th Century," or even "Samaritans." However distant and different in time, in dress, and in belief, they were all included in one people.

Today we are uneasily aware of the trivialization of travel. Travelers' accounts dwell more heavily on where they stayed and what they

bought than on what they saw; the counting is left to the experts, and for good reason. In the last decades counting has been a somber task. As if in remembrance of the consequences of the old Davidic census, it has been done in fear, numbering the fallen, the saving remnant, the defenders of outposts. The gruesome counting of those who had perished during World War II was succeeded for years by columns of names in Jewish periodicals of survivors seeking relatives and friends. In Israel they count themselves and those around them. Those who come out of Russia still count in the old way: how many newspapers are published, how many synagogues are open, how many Jews left in the last year, what is the natural increase of the community? It may be that when Jews stop counting and begin to behave like ordinary travelers, telling us what they ate and drank, and whether they enjoyed themselves, they are also telling us something about Jews in the modern era. If the world is becoming just one large marketplace, with or without Muzak, perhaps it is not so menacing to Jews after all; and we can see in triviality, alas, the symbol of safety.

ment about both himself and psychoanalysis still held true: their reputation did not extend beyond Austria's (then Austria-Hungary's) borders, but first began at these borders. There were nearly 3,000 participants at the Congress, but only thirty of these were Austrian—and the number of fully-qualified analysts in Vienna itself has been variously estimated at seven to twenty-six. The Austrian government did encourage the local analysts to act as hosts to the Congress, and even extended an official welcome to it. The government's interest in using the lavish architectural heritage of the Hapsburgs to make Vienna an international congress center (with accompanying gains in prestige, foreign currency, and tourism) was obvious. Yet the "poor communication" between the local organizers of the Congress and the visiting analysts was apparent from the very beginning. The badly organized registration procedures engendered chaos, irritation, and frustration. Some participants found that their registration papers, sent in long before, had not been processed; others, that hotel rooms they had paid for were not available; still others, told that they had never registered, produced cancelled checks to prove the contrary. The reception staff itself often seemed ignorant of the Congress procedures; lines, moving at a pace reminiscent of one of those longer analyses, formed, and visible quanta of anxiety were dissolved by the (practically therapeutic) sharing of these griefs among the analysts. Nevertheless, the Viennese analysts and the Viennese authorities persevered in their efforts to impress upon their European and American guests that psychoanalysis had indeed returned to Vienna.

The rest of the Viennese ignored the analysts as they previously had ignored Freud—although the ignorance was not quite innocent, and carried its own charge of panic, fear, and hostility. The ornate Rathaus—something either out of a fairy tale or a patient's dream—was the site of a lavish mayoral reception, ostensibly to make amends to Vienna's most famous son. (The Austrians were astonished, not very long ago, to

The (Freudian) Congress of Vienna

Edith Kurzweil

IN July of 1971, the psychoanalysts returned to Vienna—thirty-three years after Freud had left his native city. They came for the 27th International Psychoanalytical Congress. Conflicting emotions dominated their return. Some came for the sole purpose of attending the Congress. Others wanted to take a tax-deductible vacation with or without their families. Some were on a pilgrimage to Freud's workplace: the small

apartment next to his residence, which had been dedicated as a museum shortly before the Congress. Some analysts came who wanted to forgive and could not, some who could forgive and would not, some were ex-Viennese who identified with Freud (and were struggling with their own past) in his alternating love and hatred for the city. One of the latter compared Vienna to a beautiful whore—lovely to behold, she said, but rotten beneath the surface.

Whatever their initial apprehensions or expectations, they all soon realized that what Freud had once declared to the Austrian govern-

EDITH KURZWEIL, a native of Vienna, has taught sociology at the New School for Social Research and is at present studying in Italy.

learn that the rest of the world considered Freud a more distinguished Austrian than either Johann Strauss or Mozart.) At this reception Anna Freud danced a waltz; in her youth only the Kaiser and his guests could dance in these enormous rooms, beneath the huge crystal chandeliers and the ornate ceilings, between the baroque pillars and statues of Hapsburgs and their servitors. The analysts devoured mountains of food in record time (press reports made much of their orality in this respect, but overlooked their oral aggression in others) and then joined Miss Freud on the dance floor. Privileged tourists, invited for a night to something like Cinderella's ball, they were apparently overawed by the *Prunk* (pompous decoration) of the setting, and may have missed a few points. For one thing, the Rathaus is a pseudo-baroque structure built late in the 19th century when the Hapsburg Empire was long past its peak. For another, the official welcoming committee did not include the Mayor of Vienna; and the Committee itself remained in one of the back rooms while most of the analysts were received by the guard at the gate. The Mayor did, however, send his deputy to address the official opening session of the Congress. The otherwise warm welcoming address was marred when the deputy referred twice to Freud as "Freund" (friend)—a two-edged "Freudian" slip, as some of us learned later, since one of the speaker's political enemies was named Freund.

Freud's relationship with Vienna was ambivalent (safely installed in London at the end of his life, he pretended once to have forgotten the name of the city in which he had lived and worked for nearly eighty years). The Viennese, for their part, still regard psychoanalysis with obsessive mistrust. Although the local newspapers and TV covered the Congress, and the thousands of participants with their gray Congress folders were hardly invisible, the populace (to judge by the reactions of those asked what they knew of the Congress) remained mired in a curious compound of ignorance and hostility. The conservatism which kept

Freud's contemporaries from appreciating psychoanalysis (or any of the intellectual innovations developed in their own city during their lifetime) is still rampant. It is easy to understand why the younger and more cosmopolitan Viennese leave to study and then to settle abroad. Many Congress participants concluded that Austrian anti-Semitism is as widespread as ever beneath the surface, and interpreted local opposition to psychoanalysis as an expression of anti-Semitism. Perhaps, but it may be just as true to point to the Viennese suspicion of anything or anyone intellectual. Vienna has UNESCO agencies, the Atomic Energy Commission, and, of course, a number of components of the Austrian version of the knowledge industry. All of these people, because they work with their minds "only," are regarded as parasites by many of the Viennese. Insofar as Jews are thought to be intellectuals, the Viennese are anti-Semitic. In any event, they do not like psychoanalysis. The popular American acceptance of the unconscious may be an artifact of the domination of the media by the educated (or ostensibly educated) middle class. It may, again, represent what the Freudians term "defense by incorporation." In any case, the Viennese attitude took us back to the early years of psychoanalysis in a way not quite intended by the local organizing committee—to the years in which it was an oppositional, even a subversive doctrine, and as such opposed by popular opinion.

Meanwhile, the Viennese and the Austrians enjoy their bureaucratic and unadventurous version of socialism. The Austrian Socialist party forms the government, and the Prime Minister is Jewish. Discussion of politics in the *Gemütlichkeit* of the cafés allows the Viennese in this situation to enjoy an unmatched complacency and self-righteousness about the rest of the world—and to forget their own dark past, with its profound anti-Semitic and Nazi episodes. Austria's present aspiration is to become like Switzerland: neutral in war and politics, prosperous, and above all, safe—an attraction for foreign tourists and foreign money alike. But the country seems over-

shadowed by its past, with its monuments, palaces, art treasures, while its living traditions (like the theater) seem reenactments of past glory, and only half-alive. The setting of the Congress, then, underscored one of Freud's favorite quotations from Goethe: "What you have inherited from your fathers, you must earn to make your own." What of the analysts themselves, and their Freudian heritage? The citation, upon reflection, may apply to them as well.

THE theme of the Congress was "The Psychoanalytical Concept of Aggression: Theoretical, Clinical, and Applied Aspects." The title proved a misnomer; the contributions and discussions were overwhelmingly, almost scholastically, theoretical. Erik Erikson, asked to speak at the insistence of the younger analysts (he had apparently not been invited to prepare a contribution), described the proceedings of the first days as "metaphysical." The tone was set, initially, by innumerable references to Freud's writings—more an exercise in piety than in critical thought, since concepts seemed derived from these rather mechanically. "Aggression," as treated at the Congress, covered an extraordinary variety of phenomena: it was depicted as explicit or covert, as a mode of mastery or a form of motility, as an expression of hatred, as qualitatively distinct from anger, as successfully or unsuccessfully "discharged." Some papers held that aggression was a partial aspect of Freud's "death instinct," others that it was one of the two basic instincts (or drives), others that it was a neurophysiological response, still others that it was a major or minor reaction to environmental stimuli. These descriptions and their accompanying explanations were often compounded, fused, and defused. The "aims" of aggression—a curious anthropomorphization of the concept—were occasionally adduced. In brief, no one concept of aggression served as the focal point of discussion.

Under the circumstances it was not surprising that many of the contributions seemed to represent long-standing differences among the Freudians. The conflict be-

tween the orthodox Freudians and the followers of the late Melanie Klein, with their emphasis on the decisive role of early infantile fantasy, broke out at a number of points—with the involvement of groups of partisans in the audience. Some speakers did not neglect to quote their earlier papers, even if in some cases the earlier references were simply elaborations of Freud's thought. Not much new evidence or new insight was presented. Meanwhile, the organizational mechanisms of the Congress limited participation in the discussion to those who counted as more or less orthodox members of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA): those who worked with the ideas of Adler, Horney, Wilhelm Reich, and Sullivan could, and in some cases did, attend as guests, but could not speak. And although the "applied" aspects of the analysis of the phenomenon of aggression implied—as the President of the IPA himself said—collaboration between the analysts and other social scientists, almost none of the latter appeared on the program, or indeed, in the audience.

A pervasive undercurrent of self-criticism, almost a sense of crisis, marked the Congress—and not only among the younger analysts. Even before he spoke, Erikson received a round of spontaneous applause, a tribute, perhaps, to a thinker and clinician who has remained within the orthodox camp while altering a good many of its precepts. Erikson struck a chord with his colleagues when he suggested that they stop discussing the established theories and instead turn to clinical evidence. This, he said, could best be found in the direct observation of children and childhood. There, anger, hostility, and rage could be observed in their original form. Regression to these earlier stages could then be connected to observation of the interaction between adult experience and life history. Adult, or ostensibly adult, concepts of reality had been formed differently from infantile or early ones—yet men continued to annihilate one another in accordance with their sense of "reality." Erikson wondered to what extent a "good" adjustment serves man's necessity to have enemies.

Erikson's work, of course, has been devoted to analyzing the conflict and fusion of character with history—a modification of Freud's concepts of nature and culture. A European analyst working in the same vein is Alexander Mitscherlich of Frankfurt. Mitscherlich is an interesting figure: a German anti-Nazi who outraged German official medicine after the war with a book entitled *Medicine without Humanity* which dealt with the collaboration of sectors of German medicine with the infamous Nazi "experiments." He had the courage—for it took precisely that in the narrow and restorative West German climate of the 1950's—to reintroduce psychoanalysis to a new German generation. His present academic affiliation is not with German medicine, but with the social scientists of the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt, that bridge between Weimar (or Jewish) Germany, and its distant successor state, the Federal Republic. Mitscherlich, in a much-discussed paper, held that it was the task of psychoanalysis and the other social sciences to examine how men's ever-present aggressivity could be transformed into sensible activity. His paper was not an exercise in callow optimism: he insisted on the fact of mankind's pervasive denial of its own destructiveness. Psychoanalysts, however, could not content themselves with diagnosing that destructiveness and leaving the solutions to others—the more so as their diagnosis had as yet to distinguish between innate aggression and culturally-induced aggression. The examination of our social institutions was a precondition for a return to Freud's hopes for psychoanalysis, that it would constitute a reservoir of ideas for a new and humane education.

Mitscherlich's criticism of his fellow analysts for abdicating their intellectual responsibilities for interdisciplinary work found implicit confirmation in the Congress sessions: I heard one contributor rebuked for borrowing from neurophysiology. Others in the audience criticized Mitscherlich to each other, and dismissed him as a "sociologist."

Psychoanalytic tradition dominated the Congress—in the person

of Anna Freud. Returning herself to Vienna for the first time since 1938—after having approved of Vienna as the location for the 1971 Congress—she was the central figure of the Congress. Much has been written about Freud and the Viennese (there were some good papers on the theme at the Congress itself). The Freuds, father and daughter (as well as the Freudians), have universalized a doctrine once alleged to be localized in origin. Orthodox psychoanalysis returned to its birthplace, and except for Miss Freud's introductory phrases, spoke English predominantly (and, in many cases, American).

Miss Freud had in recent writings held that innovation was not necessarily progress in psychoanalysis. She had also characterized the present younger generation as more interested in the struggle of man against man (or society) than with himself. Her closing address, however, went beyond a narrowly defined orthodoxy. She synthesized the Congress papers, presented new insights about the sequence and stages of aggression, and proposed new avenues of inquiry. Like her father, she seemed to possess an ability to speculate in educated or disciplined fashion, a readiness to discard fixed beliefs. She seemed more open to the ideas of the "deviants" than her orthodox followers, who treated her during the Congress as a totem-like figure.

Freudian psychoanalysis is in a crisis today, not least because of the insistence of some analysts on concentrating on minutiae divorced from larger and more critical reflection on their work. Their theory, at times, has an overly abstract quality, as if it were a defense against reality rather than a description of it. The striking minimization of clinical evidence during the discussions reflected this tendency. One of those who opposed it was the Los Angeles analyst Ralph Greenson, who criticized his colleagues for stereotyping all relationships to patients as "transference" or "counter-transference," and insisted on the direct, human intervention of the therapist as a healer of suffering. His voice was not lost, but notes of

this kind were difficult to hear in a cacophony of concepts. The orthodox analysts keep on winning theoretical battles with deviant colleagues (insofar as they talk to them at all), but they may well lose the war, since vulgarization may follow their own failure to communicate with the educated public.

It is quite true that a scientific congress is not primarily an occasion for addressing the public, but it is a public event nevertheless. The esoteric discourse of the analysts showed itself in a particularly painful light in the vague generalities uttered by many of them as a substitute for serious social discourse. The gap between psychoanalytic theory, clinical practice, and social practice remains immense—most contributions gave no indication of how psychoanalysis could be applied to general social thought, much less to purposive institutional alteration. The contributions, as Erikson said, were metaphysical and metaphysical. Even Mitscherlich's demand for interdisciplinary work was programmatic rather than concrete. And Mitscherlich's demand for "implementation" of the findings of the clinical and social sciences of man raises the classical question of social thought, the question of power. By whom and for whom are the findings to be "implemented"? On this, the analysts were silent.

Yet, among themselves, the analysts' struggle for power was important—so important that they ostensibly ignored any psychoanalytic study of the Congress proceedings or of their own behavior during the week. The adulation of Miss Freud was at times embarrassing to an outside observer (a constant clicking of cameras followed her)—although it seemed that this was not entirely a case of a schoolboy's crush on a teacher. The older analysts, in this class, were more stricken than the young. They had known Miss Freud personally for years, of course, but they were also members of a hierarchic organization of which she was the spiritual head. There was much speculation

during the Congress about who would or could succeed her in this function after her death, and some suggestions that a power struggle among the older and most respected analysts might ensue. A struggle of this sort would have roots in other matters than psychoanalytic theory: in the vexed question of the status of non-medical analysts as members of the IPA (Miss Freud herself is not a physician, and she, the French, and the Dutch have encouraged lay analysis); in the domination of the IPA by its American members; in the varying theoretical composition and rigor of the different national member groups; in differences on the nature and process of training and on admission to the status of full member. The IPA seems in fact to be faced with a routine social crisis. The charismatic founder and his immediate disciples are dead, the heiress to the holy office will not long be with us, and the problems of routinization entail conflict. However "accepting" or "understanding" the individual analysts may be in their healing roles, as members of the organization they display all the characteristics of self-righteousness, in-fighting, and political amorality we usually associate with less exalted persons.

ALL of this did not escape the younger analysts and the candidates, who formed a rather adult and disciplined version of what in other scholarly organizations is known as a "radical caucus." The candidates asked for standardized criteria for admission to training and in the training programs themselves, and less secrecy and arbitrariness in the decisions of their senior colleagues. They proposed the formation of an international student organization, a curious duplicate of the IPA, although the vigor of their overall attack was blunted somewhat by a political fact: their careers, after all, depend upon the older analysts. But these cannot without embarrassment claim that all is peaceful in their kingdom: the mixture of applause and occasional boos which greeted the contributions, the social striving, and the hierarchy of deference and attention which marked the

extracurricular dimensions of the Congress, all showed quite clearly that conflict is there.

The future of psychoanalysis depends upon the solution of these problems. The discipline is at a crossroads. If it continues as it is at present, a dogmatized routine may come to prevail, and reduce a movement and a system of thought which once had historical dimensions to the status of a small sect. But another alternative is possible: the acute insights and profound techniques of psychoanalysis can serve as an area of preparation for younger psychiatrists and psychotherapists who will do other, shorter, and shallower types of therapy. Still another possibility remains, in accordance with Freud's belief in the educational mission of psychoanalysis: enlarged cooperation with the social sciences. As a by-product, this might alter psychoanalytic orthodoxy, since the social scientists can hardly be expected to accept the anathemas, excommunications, and heresy-hunting of a rigid orthodoxy. Anna Freud herself touched upon this possibility at the Congress, in calling for more openness toward opinions hitherto deemed "deviant."

PERHAPS, after all, the Congress's concentration on the theme of aggression was justified. Quite possibly, aggression's ultimate roots will never be found—or dissolved. But in collaboration with the other social sciences, psychoanalysis may contribute to deepening our understanding of the phenomenon. Some analysts think that aggression can be neutralized: their views ought to be confronted with Mitscherlich's notion of the dual, instinctual, and cultural sources of aggression. Miss Freud recommended that the analysts, for a time, return to clinical studies, and let theory rest: at first glance ostensibly a-theoretical, the suggestion may open the way for a new kind of theoretical realignment with the social sciences. Freud thought that the truth would set men free. Liberation remains an impossibly distant goal, but new knowledge may give us new dimensions of freedom. The very constrictions of the International Psychoanalytical Congress were, in this respect, instructive.



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Schooling in Democracy

AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE 1607-1783. By LAWRENCE A. CREMIN. *Harper & Row*. 688 pp. \$15.00.

Reviewed by
BEATRICE KEVITT HOFSTADTER

WHETHER or not the crisis of our time can properly be called a revolution, most people agree that its nature is cultural. By that term we intend something deeper and more fundamental than a political or economic or even social crisis. Our schools at every level are caught at the center of this storm—who should attend which of them or even any of them, what should be taught, who should teach, and, most of all, who should decide these disturbing questions? We are used to debating the value of traditional versus progressive teaching methods, but now it is the very idea of the school itself, the very purpose of institutions of education, that is called into question. Yet for all our pretensions to getting at fundamentals, one assumption remains unexamined—except by students who in dropping out radically negate it. That is the traditional American assumption that education can and ought to carry the major share of the burden of social betterment, that the coming generation can be taught in school how to lead better lives than we do, how to make their world better than the one we live in now.

This remains the common faith despite the disrepute into which the idea of history as progress has fallen. Movements which claim to be making uncompromisingly radical criticisms of current society affirm their subscription to this common faith by the very nature of the

innovations they demand. This is true of demands ranging from the free day-care centers of Women's Liberation to the student-power slogans of yesterday's campus radicals to the local-control fights and open college-admissions programs of minority liberation movements. For most of us, adversaries as much as defenders of the culture, education is still the key to the fulfillment of individual and social aspirations, in a world in which every other traditional value except perhaps "love" is under siege.

A NEW history of colonial education ought to tell us how Americans have come to hold this curious faith, and Lawrence Cremin ought to have been the right man to write it. Cremin is easily the most accomplished historian of American education working today. His latest book is meant to be the first of a planned three-volume study of 350 years of American education, conceived in broad social and intellectual rather than narrow institutional terms. Cremin's project has been given the prestigious support of the American Historical Association, the United States Office of Education, and the Carnegie Corporation. The excellence of Cremin's previous work, notably his study of progressive education, *The Transformation of the Schools*, leads one to hope that he would take a hard critical look at the standard American assumptions about education, and perhaps make us see that the idea of education as a mode of secular salvation is not one of the eternal verities.

Unhappily, Cremin is himself a believer. Aware as he is of the pietistic bias of his predecessors in the field, who wrote as if the public schools were the prime cause of the virtue and glory of our country, he too sees education as both individual liberation and national salvation. The thrust of his book is toward an optimistic celebration of colonial "schooling in freedom."

Literacy, for him, does nothing but liberate. Colonial primary schools, freed by the wide Atlantic from the social rigidities perpetuated in their English counterparts, the charity schools, were able to teach all comers the useful arts which stimulated colonial productivity, and the political intelligence which ultimately "sparked independence."

Cremin's pietism is, to be sure, newly sophisticated in method. As Bernard Bailyn pointed out more than ten years ago in his brief but significant *Education in the Forming of American Society*, not one of the vast number of histories of American education has had much to say about the role education has played in the general course of American development. Cremin has now brought education out of this artificial isolation into the mainstream, an achievement of great importance. He defines educational institutions in the broadest possible terms: first, families, churches, political units as small as the New England town and as large as the first British Empire; then schools, educational thinkers and practitioners, popularizers, the press. If at times he overreaches—if, as he claims, "all institutions educate," then what is not educational history?—he has nevertheless succeeded in writing the first non-parochial work in the field.

The breadth of this approach makes it possible for Cremin to incorporate a good deal of the best and the latest work that has been done in Reformation and Enlightenment social and intellectual history, from Phillipe Aries's *Centuries of Childhood*, Peter Laslett's *The World We Have Lost*, and Michael Walzer's *Revolution of the Saints*, to Bernard Bailyn's studies of the ideology and politics of the American Revolution. Cremin shares these historians' sense of the revolutionary nature of the early modern period in both Europe and America. One of the best sections of his book is his opening discussion of the human-

BEATRICE KEVITT HOFSTADTER, here making her first appearance in these pages, teaches history at Brooklyn College.

istic critique of scholasticism made by Erasmus and Thomas More, a critique he persuasively describes as having effected a "momentous shift in English educational thought," which secularized education by casting "Everyman, for the first time in history, in the role of student," and also changed its very nature "from an education that confirms status to an education that confers status." Later, Cremin describes with equal skill and precision how the ideas of such moral and scientific innovators as Locke and Newton were made available by popularizers to a public avid for self-improvement, and soon became part of the general consciousness.

THE trouble is, he then goes on to describe the advancement of learning from Erasmus in 16th-century Europe to 17th-century Puritans and then to Franklin and Jefferson in 18th-century America as if it had moved forward as smoothly and beneficently, and free from costs and losses, as if directed by a divine hand. Most of the colonial populace, it would seem, was led in the colonial schools to desire an affluent, highly literate, democratic society. One gets no sense from Cremin's study that this secularization of education and its consequent redirection to worldly ends met any resistance, or engendered any new sets of difficulties and new kinds of inequalities. Erasmus, for example, is shown to have stated that the goal of his ideal magistrate, the Christian Prince, should be "not merely to preserve but to extend the prosperity of the state," and to have known that therefore education would have to be "a device for maintaining public docility and order." Yet the discussion that ought to follow, of the problem of education as social control, nowhere appears.

Surely this has always been one of the primary and most ambiguous—and in our time, most problematic—functions of popular democratic education. For democracies, there is no automatic resolution of the contradiction between the cultural homogeneity ordinarily required for public order and the libertarian right of

those outside the dominant culture to refuse to submit to it. English colonials dealt with divergent ethnic groups by excluding some—blacks and Indians—and, insofar as they were able, coercing others—the Dutch in New York, the Germans in Pennsylvania. That they tolerated the amount of difference they did was more a result of political necessity than of any high-minded appreciation of cultural variety. Cremin does discuss these exclusions as such, but this does not prevent him from saying, "It was no narrow view of education that fired the imagination of the colonists but rather a vision as open as their land and its possibilities." This is simply too grand and happy a judgment.

Cremin is equally rhapsodic about the devotion of colonial education to economic ends. He praises Franklin for teaching that "life itself would be a continuing education for those enterprising men and women who would make it so. In the very business of living, the greatest profits accrued to those who learned most diligently." The schools Franklin planned were similarly bent on teaching economic skills. But colonial society cannot be taken, as Cremin tends to take it, as cut from a singleminded production-oriented pattern. That Franklin's economic utilitarianism might not have been wholly welcome to all his contemporaries is never suggested, though in our time, when technology is accused of being socially counter-productive or even of pressing us toward totalitarianism, an exploration of whatever ambiguities or resistances Franklin aroused in his fellows ought to have been undertaken.

TO CLAIM all Cremin does for colonial education, to make village schools and tiny academies and colleges seem not merely to have served pragmatic needs but also to have inspired productivity and to have fostered a thirst for knowledge and freedom, is to raise expectations which no system of education, however wise and courageous, can ever fulfill. Schools are not independent agents which can, if only they would, bring about national virtue and harmony—and they never were. To give this traditional mis-

conception of their capacities and their mission the backing of elaborate modern scholarship is a disservice both to the schools and to society. If Cremin had defined the role of the schools more modestly, if he had kept in view a sense of what was lost in the secularization of education, he would have served us better.

The point I am proposing here is not limited in its application to the past. The almost religious quality of American faith in education still leads us to expectations that cannot be fulfilled; disappointment leads, in turn, to gross anti-intellectualism and know-nothing hostility to the very idea of education. We are living through just such a reaction, and one way of defending ourselves against it must surely be to make our educational goals realistic, and thereby make them possible to fulfill.

Art and Scholarship

JEWISH CEREMONIAL ART AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE. By ABRAHAM KANOF. *Harry N. Abrams, Inc.* 253 pp. 245 illustrations. \$25.00.
THE HORNED MOSES IN MEDIEVAL ART AND THOUGHT. By RUTH MELLINKOFF. *University of California Press.* 210 pp. 130 illustrations. \$16.50.

Reviewed by EDOUARD RODITI

OF THE production of art books in recent years there seems to be no end. Among their constantly growing number, a small enclave has developed of books devoted specifically to "Jewish art," or, to put it cynically but perhaps more precisely, to those aspects of art considered likely to be of interest to the Jewish book-buying public. These books have tended to be distinguished mainly by a kind of intellectual confusion that has allowed their authors to include indiscriminately as "Jewish art" the Hellenistic murals of the Dura-Europos synagogue, Chagall's Bible illustrations, abstract paintings and sculptures by younger American-

EDOUARD RODITI's article, "The Real Grandees," appeared in our October number.

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Jewish and Israeli artists, the works of Modigliani or Pissaro, and the traditional ceremonial arts and crafts of the Diaspora. A book like Abram Kanof's, which limits its scope strictly to a discussion of these last, traditional Jewish arts and crafts, necessarily comes as a welcome addition to our libraries, if only because it will help clear the air of some of the intellectual confusion created by more ambitious projects.

JEWISH ceremonial art has a long history, although the physical evidence remaining from two thousand years of productivity in the field is lamentably scanty. Again and again, the accumulated treasures of important and ancient communities were scattered and lost, or ruthlessly looted and destroyed. There were undoubtedly more than a hundred synagogues, for instance, in medieval Spain and Portugal, but only five have survived—in Toledo, Cordova, and Tomar—in sufficiently well-preserved condition to enable us to study their architecture and decoration in any detail. In medieval France, England, Germany, Spain, and Portugal, Jewish books were repeatedly burned in public by the carload; there can be no question that many more illuminated manuscripts were destroyed in this way than the few that survived and are known to us. In the sacristy-museums of many a Western European cathedral one can admire masterpieces of Christian liturgical art that are known, from old documents, to have been made from the silver and gold that had been looted or confiscated from Jewish communities. And of course we have not even begun to calculate precisely how much ceremonial art was lost in this century to the Nazis. It is almost a miracle that so much Jewish literature and art has survived so many pogroms, persecutions, expropriations, lootings, and expulsions.

Abram Kanof is a New York physician, scholarly collector, and generous patron of Jewish ceremonial art. In *Jewish Ceremonial Art and Religious Observance* he writes as an enlightened enthusiast, out of a wish to communicate his knowledge and appreciation to

other laymen. Quite properly, throughout this magnificently produced and illustrated book, Kanof respects the distinction between "arts and crafts" and "great art." The ceremonial objects which he discusses were produced through the ages by Jewish craftsmen, some of whom were highly skilled artisans, others of whom were gifted representatives of "folk art." Few, however, could be said to have matched the technique, style, and achievement of those Christian practitioners of "great art" who, beginning with Giotto in the early Renaissance, gradually won for the painter and the sculptor the esteem and status which had previously been reserved for the scholar or humanist. Kanof points out that the craftsman's skill was sometimes designated in classical Hebrew writings as *hokhmah*, a term generally used to denote scholarly wisdom. Nevertheless, the Jewish craftsman, however skilled, rarely enjoyed the same prestige in the community as the lettered scholar.

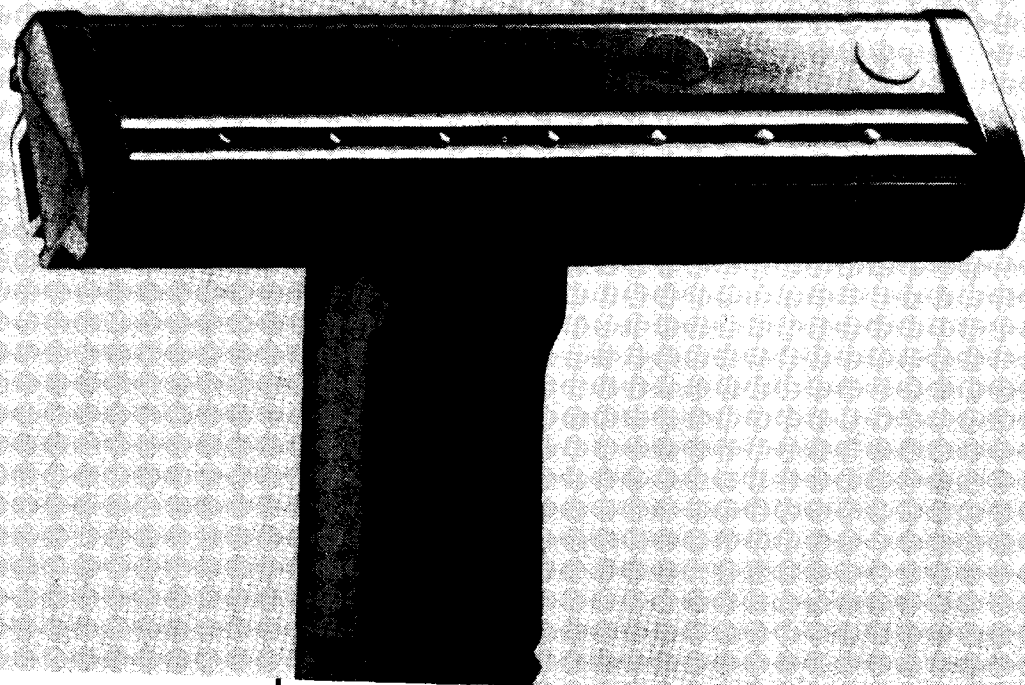
Throughout the book, Kanof insists on the close relationship between Jewish ceremonies, whether in the home or in the synagogue, and the Jewish art that they fostered and inspired. Iconographically, the objects he discusses are generally Jewish by their very nature, though their styles usually bear the marks of Gentile influence, especially in the many decorative details borrowed from models of secular Christian art.

ON POINTS of sheer scholarship in the history of ideas and of iconography, Kanof is sometimes hasty or superficial, occasionally quite wrong. In discussing the ornamental uses of the Hebrew alphabet and the mystical interpretations of its significance and creative power, Kanof refers to the 13th-century Spanish kabbalist Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia, but neglects to quote earlier texts of Philo Judaeus and the *Sefer Yetzirah* which are the sources of much kabbalist meditation on these themes. In discussing the use of winged angels in Hellenistic and early medieval Jewish iconography, he refers to Christian uses of these

figures, but fails to state that they in turn are derived from the winged Genius, the winged Victory, and the winged Eros of Greco-Roman pagan iconography. While noting the absence of kiddush-cups and their representation and description in the art and literature of medieval Spain, he fails to point out that, among Sephardim who lived in Moslem lands where the drinking of alcohol was forbidden, the use of wine in religious ceremonies was often restricted.

KANOF's historical account and interpretation of Jewish ritual and ceremonial art are limited almost exclusively to Ashkenazic traditions, and the majority of the fine illustrations that enrich his book depict examples of European-Jewish art. It is regrettable that he should not have devoted more attention, for example, to the ceremonial art of the Jews of Iran, which, as it happens, is fairly well represented in New York's Jewish Museum. Figurative synagogue carpets from Iran, which are still being produced, depict the same traditional biblical scenes that have been found in the painted murals of Dura-Europos and the floor-mosaics of some synagogues of Greco-Roman antiquity. The choice of such a limited number of biblical scenes is in its own way quite instructive. The scattered urban Jewish communities of classical antiquity lived in a slave economy; wealthier members, following the prescriptions of Deuteronomy, regularly converted their house slaves to Judaism and in due time gave them their freedom. For many of these slaves, and other converts as well, who had not yet learned to read and write Hebrew, figurative illustrations in synagogues of the more religiously significant biblical scenes served the same educational purposes as did, in later European *Haggadoth*, the illustrations that were intended to instruct Jewish children who were not yet fully literate. Because the Iranian community is today perhaps the only large community to have an uninterrupted history of some two thousand years, its ceremonial art has preserved a few such traditions that have long been lost in other lands.

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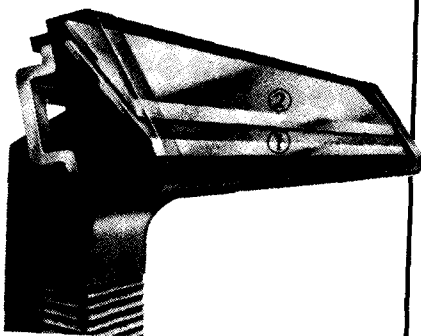


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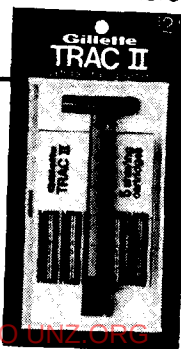
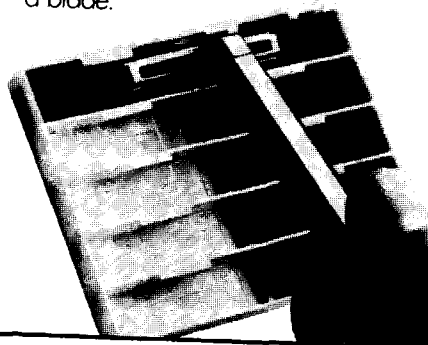
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Despite these occasional lapses and omissions, *Jewish Ceremonial Art and Religious Observance* remains a valuable contribution to existing literature in the field. Its many illustrations of the rare and beautiful objects preserved in New York's Jewish Museum should lead many readers to take a more lively interest in that institution. Kanof's book might also prompt the Jewish Theological Seminary, which is responsible for the administration of the museum, to formulate more consistent policies for the conservation and exhibition of its priceless permanent collections. Let us also hope that the book will inspire more detailed and scholarly study of some of the iconographic and other problems that it raises.

RUTH MELLINKOFF's scholarly discussion of a single iconographical problem, *The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought*, is an exemplary work of its kind. She traces the horns which puzzle or shock us on the brow of Michelangelo's Moses back, in early medieval and patristic thought, to Saint Jerome's Latin translation of the Hebrew word *qeren* in Exodus 34:29 which can mean either "horn" or "ray of light"; and, in medieval art, to representations of Moses wearing a Viking-type horned helmet in the miniatures which illustrate the 11th-century manuscript of Aelfric's Heptateuch, an Anglo-Saxon paraphrase of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua.

Such headdresses or helmets adorned with animal horns are known to us sporadically from the art of some North American Indians, from Neolithic art, from African art, especially that of the Dogon and Senufo tribes, as well as from the arts of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Tuscany. It is more than probable that all of them originated in the magical ceremonies of primitive hunters. But horned headdresses or helmets continued to appear more specifically in Northern European art, whether Celtic, Germanic, or Scandinavian, from about 1000 B.C.E. until at least the 8th century of the Christian era. They are described in detail in *Beowulf* and in a 10th- or 11th-century manuscript of

Cynewulf's *Elene* poem. Among Anglo-Saxon and Norman nobles who claimed descent from Vikings or Norsemen, horned helmets were thus remembered as symbols of power and leadership as late as the age of Aelfric, who dedicated his Heptateuch translation to Aethelweard, a nobleman of Wessex. For the depiction of Moses, as leader of a migrating people that was destined to conquer Canaan, such a helmet would have seemed most appropriate in 11th-century England. Aelfric indeed calls Moses *heretoga*, an Anglo-Saxon word which means "commander," "chieftain," or "mighty leader" (compare modern German *Herzog*).

Ruth Mellinkoff attributes the subsequent wide diffusion, throughout Catholic Western Europe, of the iconographic tradition of the horned Moses in part to its hold on the unlettered popular mind, but also to Rashi's commentary on Exodus 34:29-30: "And it came to pass when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony . . . the skin of his face shone. . . . And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone: and they were afraid to come nigh him." Rashi explains that the skin of the face of Moses "beamed with light" when he brought the second Tablets on the Day of Atonement, and that "an expression connected with the word . . . horns . . . is used here because light radiates from a point and projects like a horn." This interpretation was then widely adopted by Christian theologians and scholars, especially by Hugh and Andrew of St. Victor, by Peter Comestor, who was born in Troyes and may have known Rashi's immediate disciples there, and by Nicholas of Lyra.

Finally, in the Catholic Church the notion of the horned Moses appears even to have influenced the shape of the traditional bishop's mitre, which changed from conical to horned after 1125. In the 18th century, the horned bishop's mitre even began to spread from Christian to Jewish ceremonial art. It occurs as the headdress of Aaron in the frontispiece of an Amsterdam *Zohar*, and again as a *kohen's* head-dress in an Australian embroidered

ceremonial cloth. (In the latter, Miss Mellinkoff interprets the mitre incorrectly as that of a Levite, though the embroidered hands clearly designate a *kohen*, in fact a descendant of Aaron, as the mitre itself is intended to suggest.)

By ONE of those twists of irony that are endemic to Jewish history, all these honorific meanings of the horned head or headdress—leadership, power, enlightenment—gradually became confused in the popular Gentile mind with other, less honorable meanings, specifically with the common idea of devils as beasts with horns. In anti-Semitic literature and art, Jews were frequently identified with the devil—an identification that in real life was strengthened visually by the pointed *Judenhut* which, beginning in the 13th century, Jews in many countries were forced to wear—and even Moses, as leader of the Jews, was sometimes depicted as having a devilish appearance.

This loss of status of the Jew, of the Synagogue as an allegorical figure, and of Moses, in much of the iconography of the later Middle Ages and of Renaissance Spain, Portugal, and Germany, reflects the general breakdown of intellectual and social communication between Jews and Christians which set in after the 12th century. In the age of Rashi, Jewish and Christian scholars had still been able to discuss problems of Old Testament interpretation and even other problems with relative freedom; later, Jewish scholars were publicly accused by the Church of sorcery and other devilish crimes. As the Jews of Western Europe suffered increasingly severe persecutions, they came to be represented more and more often as despicable paupers, misers, and sorcerers, wherever they could still be encountered, or as outlandish monsters wherever they were no longer allowed to live. Miss Mellinkoff concludes her fascinating and unusually well-documented study by suggesting that in giving horns to his 16th-century Moses, Michelangelo was actually breaking with an established motif and deliberately harking back to an earlier, purer, and more humane tradition.

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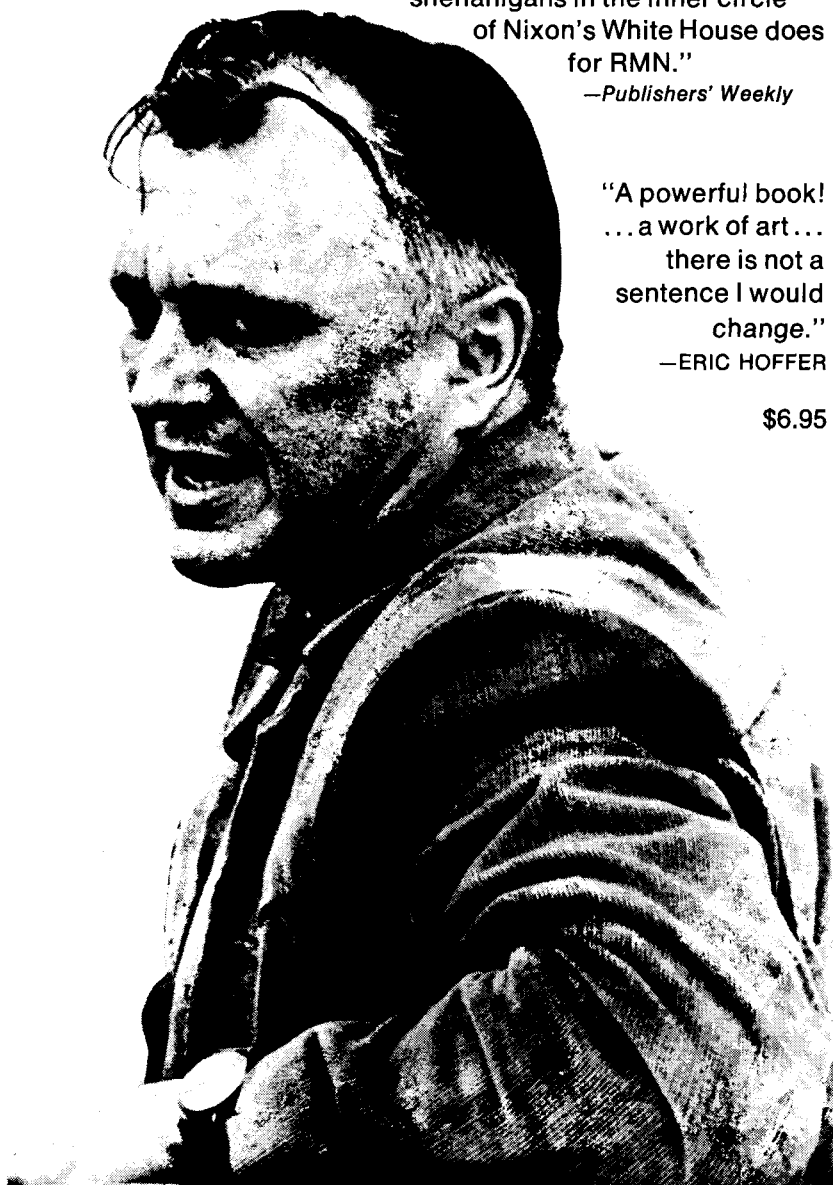
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The Great Commoner

BRYAN: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN. By LOUIS W. KOENIG. Putnam. 736 pp. \$14.95.

Reviewed by
WILSON CAREY MCWILLIAMS

LOUIS KOENIG's biography of William Jennings Bryan is more than the effort to rehabilitate a man; it is a struggle to restore the integrity of our political history. The image of Bryan marketed and consumed by most intellectuals is a crude caricature, and given Bryan's importance to his age, one which results in a fabulous distortion of the past that darkens our understanding of the present.

Of course, the materials for the myth were ready at hand. Bryan was pompous and vain, especially

WILSON CAREY MCWILLIAMS is professor of political science at Livingston College, Rutgers University.

after years of travail had encouraged him to identify himself with his cause ("I have always been right," he told a mild critic in 1908). His ventures into diplomacy were often naive; he did oppose condemning the Klan by name in 1924; historians did not invent the Scopes trial. But the fabric of the prevailing image is crazy-quilted, emphasizing the end of Bryan's life when he was sick and increasingly alone. It is, moreover, too selective for accident; it could only be the creation of malice.

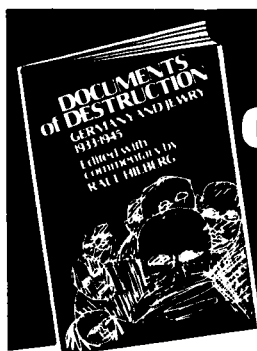
Accounts of the period invariably cite John Peter Altgeld's opposition to Bryan's nomination in 1896 and his sardonic response to the "Cross of Gold" oration ("What did he say, anyway?"). They omit Altgeld's early commitment to Bryan's renomination or his reference to the Commoner, in 1900, as "the greatest figure in the civilized world." The texts analyze Bryanite economics in terms of their supposedly "paranoid" basis, contriving to slight or ignore Bryan's belief in "pump-priming," his

demand for guaranteed bank deposits and for regulation of the exchanges, his advocacy of the income tax and a policy of jobs or aid to the unemployed. Free Silver, as Koenig points out, was a symbol for a whole range of economic reforms and a new attitude toward government. Silver was convenient partly because it was a comparatively respectable way of approaching the then radical, now conventional, policy of managed currency and partly because of the marvelous rhetorical possibilities of contrasting it with "gold," but the terrified magnates who fuelled Mark Hanna's machine never allowed a peroration to muddle their perception of reality.

By contemporary standards, Bryan was a racist, but was sincere enough in his devotion to equality to win the support of DuBois and Monroe Trotter in 1908 and to alarm more than one of his Southern enthusiasts. He was committed, early in the game, to women's suffrage. In the battle against imperialism, his tactics have been criticized but never his convictions. And there is a contemporary ring to his distrust of State Department bureaucracy, his suspicion of excessive executive power in foreign affairs (Congress, he argued, needs the same power to end a war that it has to begin it), and his insistence that in time of war, wealth should be conscripted as well as men.

Similarly, Bryan feared the ties between the universities and the trusts, and resigned as trustee of Illinois College rather than accept money from "Plutocrats . . . seeking to strangle economic truth." (It is unfortunate that Koenig sees this as only a moralistic opposition to "bad men incapable of good." He would hardly have put the same interpretation on the almost identical statements of Thorstein Veblen.)

Bryan was neither a profound nor an original thinker, but American intellectuals have been able to forgive such defects in political leaders, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman being recent examples. But Roosevelt was a patriot and Truman was no threat. Bryan has always maddened the intellectuals because, while disre-



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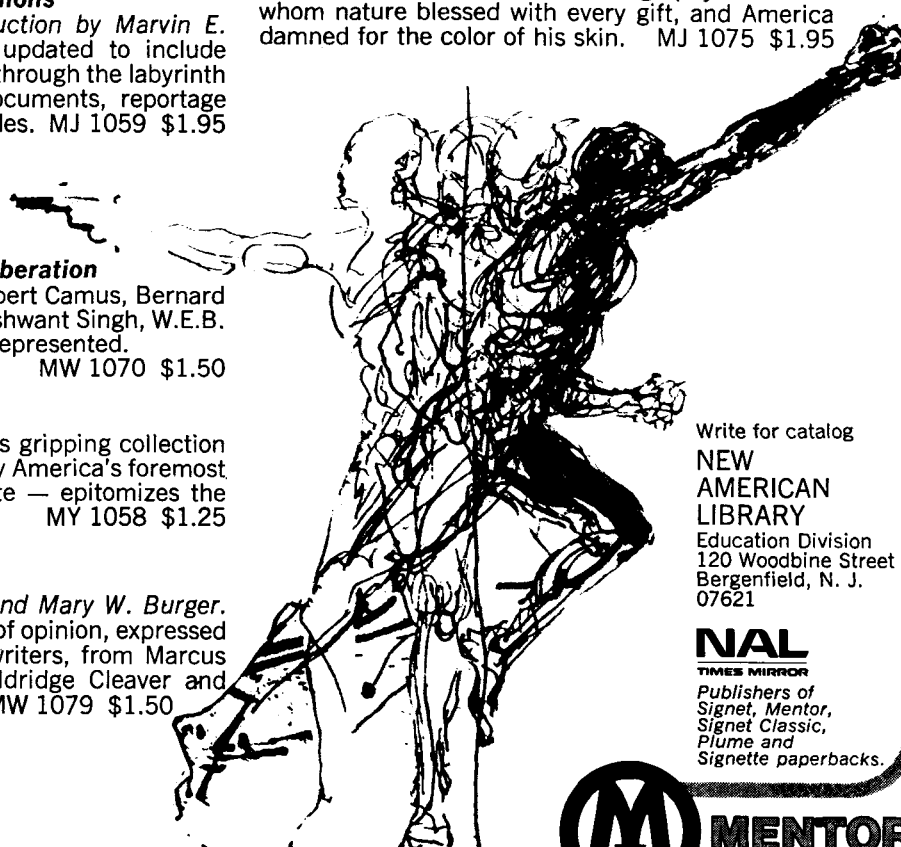
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spectful of intellectual fashion and established academic wisdom, he was so often right when they were wrong. Academic economists at the turn of the century called ignorant the measures their successors would adopt in a quarter, or half-century. (At the time, the New York *Times* feared that the income tax would be "fatal to the solidarity of patriotism.") Lincoln Steffens boasted of having influenced Wilson to support Carranza in Mexico; Bryan preferred Villa and Zapata. As Wilson discovered, what made it so difficult to knock Bryan "into a cocked hat" was the likelihood that one would come to decide he had been right all along.

Moreover, Bryan was courageous, as his worst enemies conceded, even when it endangered his ambitions. He might have had the Democratic nomination in 1912—and given the Republican split, certain election—if he had not presented his "anti-Wall Street" resolution to the convention. He gave up the State Department rather than support what he took to be Wilson's drift toward war. He maneuvered and schemed for favor, attention, and office, often transparently, but the man had a moral gyroscope which called a halt at critical points. A threat to the intellectuals' pride of intellect, Bryan was also a rebuke to their pettiness. They have been able to forgive many who were worse than themselves; they could not endure the fear that Bryan might be better. The shadow-Bryan of the myth had to be created to enable intellectual America to live easily with itself.

Perhaps the worst result of the myth, as Koenig suggests, is the failure to acknowledge Bryan's role in the building of the modern Democratic party. According to the tale, Bryan's oratory, almost by accident, swept him into the nomination and made him for years the symbol of the forces of revolt against untrammelled capitalism. As Koenig's admirable account demonstrates, this ignores the planning and the skill at infighting that gave Bryan his opportunity, as well as the persistence and ability with which Bryan insured, in succeeding elections, that the verdict of 1896 would not be reversed. If 1896 was a "critical election" in American

party politics, it was partly because Bryan was available as a critical man.

This aspect of the Bryan-myth has been less challenged because here the story has suited the purposes of radical historians. Their very contemporary concerns have made it essential to discredit the Populists' fusion with the Democrats; to do that, it has been necessary to reduce Bryan's appeal to a few gaudy phrases and the lure of victory. Henry Demarest Lloyd's famous remark that free silver was the "cowbird of reform," admirably suited to such a design, is always quoted. But Lloyd's recognition that the Populists in 1896 faced a "Hobson's choice" between fusion and playing the reactionaries' game gets little attention, and his comment in 1900 that Bryan was "as advanced as we need him to be" is ignored altogether. Such selectivity conceals the reason that Bryan knew himself to be the "logic of the situation" in 1896: the Democrats could not hope to win without the Populists, and Bryan was the only Democratic candidate radical enough to compel Populist support. (Debs, for example, refused to be a candidate against him for the Populist nomination.) As Koenig indicates, fusion in 1896 was at least a fair compromise; as Bryan shaped the Democratic party over the years, it took on the qualities of a capture of the major by the minor party rather than the reverse. But such a reading of history hardly demonstrates the futility, for radicals, of partisan and electoral politics.

INEVITABLY, a book like Koenig's must discuss the Dayton "Monkey Trial," a shabby charade made notable only by Bryan's disastrous performance. Here, I think, Koenig is most outstanding. Almost alone, he sees that there were issues of substance that influenced Bryan's intervention. Bryan was not a complete literalist about the Scriptures: Darrow could trap him in contradictions in which a fundamentalist doctrinaire or a charlatan would never have become entangled. As Lawrence Levine contends, Bryan felt driven to defend biblical literalism because he re-

jected evolution as a political teaching. But to argue, as so many liberals have, that there is no connection between Darwinism in biology and Darwinism as social theory is nonsense. (It would be interesting to compare attitudes toward the Scopes trial with reactions to Eric Goldman's magisterial *Rendezvous with Destiny*, which makes the case which Bryan's own lack of intellectual facility kept him from making, that Darwinian analysis led liberalism into moral confusion and a politics of drift.) In fact, as Bryan delightedly pointed out at Dayton, Darrow had argued in his defense of Leopold and Loeb that those who taught the boys the philosophy of Nietzsche shared the responsibility for the murder.

The question which Bryan hoped, and failed to, pose clearly was the extent to which the community may control the *moral* as well as the technical education of the young. If Darwinism is "atheistic," and religion cannot be taught, can the scientific doctrine claim a special status on technical grounds alone? The dispute raises all the problems, so much bruited in recent years, which surround the moral and social responsibility of educational institutions.

THE Scopes trial, more than any event, enabled the intellectuals to destroy Bryan as a political figure because in this case he argued on their grounds. Paradoxically, they achieved the effect only by denying that ideas are of critical concern to politics, and in this, as in other things, Bryan's position has returned to haunt them in the schools and colleges. But Bryan, unlike today's fashionable leftists, had a moral creed that was substance as well as style; his life, as Koenig comments, was better testimony in support of his case than any words he spoke at Dayton.

But Koenig is *too* concerned to do away with the old image. Bryan's life is instructive, but Bryan himself was not an "intensely contemporary" man; he would, as Koenig himself makes clear, have feared and despised the shamelessness of modern America and pitied its growing loneliness and self-disgust. It is simply ludicrous, moreover, to compare Bryan with

Robert Kennedy in 1968 as Koenig does: a social and moral, as well as a historical gulf separates the two. And it only detracts from Koenig's argument to call Bryan an "ideologist." The term may be calculated to give Bryan standing among intellectuals, but it does not fit. Bryan never had a coherent political philosophy and probably never felt the need for one. He was inclined to trust his intuitions and the promptings of his emotions, and it was better that he did, for, warts and all, they were the core of his strength. "Moralist" would fit Bryan better, but even that term is a cheat, implying either that Bryan lacked pragmatic judgment or that his opponents were amoral. Ideology and moralism describe *ways* of reasoning, and what is vital in Bryan's case was the *substance* of his beliefs, which welded the Christian demand for community and vision of human fraternity onto the spare structure of democratic institutions. There were also those qualities of character that Willa Cather saw in Bryan and the West alike, "magnitude and monotony . . . richness and lack of variety . . . inflammability and volubility . . . strength and crudeness . . . high seriousness and self-confidence . . . egotism and nobility." These are the old roots, the ambiguous anchors of American civic virtues, and if they seem things of the past, Americans have abundant reasons for regret.

Sun & "Surfurbia"

LOS ANGELES: THE ARCHITECTURE OF FOUR ECOLOGIES. By REYNER BANHAM. Harper & Row. 256 pp. Illustrated. \$6.95.

Reviewed by RICHARD SCHICKEL

THE problem has always been rationalizing one's basic, and essentially visceral, liking for the place. I mean, it's just not done—expressing affection for Los Angeles, a preference for it over up-

tight San Francisco, the sneaky feeling that it may just be (now that New York's decline is so obvious and so seemingly irreversible) America's great city, if only because it so strikingly expresses what is American about America. But now the English architectural historian Reyner Banham has suggested the outlines of a platform on which to take a somewhat less temporizing stand.

His subtitle admirably outlines his theme. Los Angeles, as he sees it, is composed of four basic eco-

logical regions (each of which has inspired an architecture suitable to it alone). There is, first of all, the great beach, in its natural state surely one of the most magnificent in the world, and in its developed state still mightily attractive and wonderfully accessible, so much so that, in Dr. Banham's view, it all but controls the psychological climate of the city. After that come the foothills, perfect setting for what Banham persuasively insists is one of the most varied and interesting ranges of contemporary home



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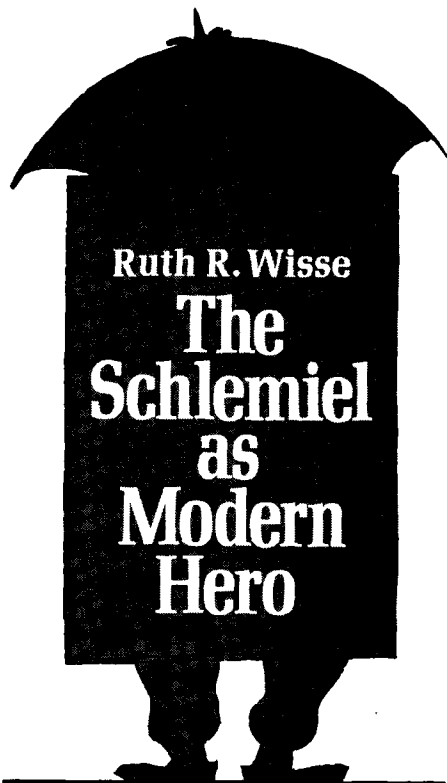
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architecture in the world. Next come the broad plains of the great valleys around the area's core basin, where are found the most easily satirized aspects of Southern California life. Finally, there is the newest ecological region, and the only one that is entirely the work of man—the freeway system. It is the interaction of all four of these regions that makes the city what only Banham has had the courage to term it, an "unrepeatable" and "unprecedented" place.

"I share neither the optimism of those who see Los Angeles as the prototype of all future cities," Banham writes, "nor the gloom of those who see it as the harbinger of universal urban doom." In short, it is what it is, a place, as he says, of splendors and miseries, graces and grotesqueries, all of which are far more amusing and stimulating—to Banham, to me, and I suspect to other secret admirers—than those of virtually any other American place.

BANHAM'S four basic regions function in something like the following fashion:

The beach, or "Surfurbia," gives the city its informal and rather raffish air. From the general absence of suits and ties, girdles and stockings, a visitor gets the impression that just about everyone may be wearing a bathing suit under his work clothes, that at the very least they may be planning an early exit from the office for some sort of simple, healthy, *outdoor* activity of the sort that New York and the other capitals of a sterner work ethic have more or less unconsciously conspired to render practically impossible through inconvenience and/or expense. All that sea, sand, sun just minutes away, the sight of all those bronzed, barefoot adolescents heading for it, surfboards poking out of their cars at rakish angles—it does something to a man, and something I judge not to be entirely bad.

"One way and another," says Banham, "the beach is what life is all about in Los Angeles," pointing out that a beach society is almost always uncompartimentalized, democratic, and that its culture represents a kind of rejection of the consumer cul-

ture, since it is "a place where a man needs to own only what he stands up in—usually a pair of frayed shorts and sunglasses." He does not mention the pace the beach seems to impose on the life surrounding it, but it is a fact that most people in Los Angeles seem to proceed as if they were strolling through soft sand. They are rarely on time for appointments, their entertainments tend to be home-made and casual, rather than restaurant-made or formal, and the whole day's schedule is more closely tied to the rising and the setting of the sun than it is in New York.

THE beach, as Banham points out, has had a profound effect on the architecture, not merely in Malibu, but everywhere in Los Angeles. Naturally, the best examples of modernism are to be found in the more expensive enclaves and these, in turn, tend to be located in Banham's second region—the foothills, whither the well-off quickly retreated in the early days, not least because, before air conditioning became universal, it was a lot cooler there than in the valleys. The first great influence on the homes they built was, naturally, Spanish. Clean-lined, low-profiled, rambling, hacienda-like structures, built around courtyards, these buildings suggest (to me at least) many of the most desirable features of the modernism that was so quickly to follow—especially the blurring of the customary firm lines separating indoor space from outdoor space.

Thus, when one stays in a Los Angeles home these days one is always receiving a nasty crack on the head as one strays into the clear glass door that only nominally hinders access to pool, porch, or patio; or one finds oneself taking a bath in a glass room, the privacy of which is guarded only by shrubbery. But these minor hazards are more than compensated for by the enhanced feeling of freedom and by the wild profusion of plantings which often spill casually in from outdoors to be nurtured under skylights. Of the Angelino's now near-instinctive tendency to dine *al fresco*, around the elaborate and permanent charcoal broiler, no

further word need be spoken at this point. Anyway, this much is clear to me, that whatever their eccentricities, people of my class—and indeed of all classes—are able to live in Los Angeles with an ease and grace and serenity that are unimaginable to the inhabitant of any decaying Eastern metropolis.

It is, however, in dealing with his third and fourth regions—the plains and the freeways—that Banham reaches heights of interpretive originality. San Francisco was “plugged into California from the sea,” but most Southern Californians came overland, bringing in their baggage “the prejudices, motivations, and ambitions of the central heartland.” They were for the most part farmers and what Los Angeles held out to them was the possibility of what Banham calls “urban homesteading”—that is, a combining of the amenities of city life with some semblance of their former ways. They didn’t expect to farm and commute, but on their small plots in the valleys they would have their yards, their gardens, a decent space between themselves and their neighbors. Had they been given a chance to vote on the matter, they would no doubt have opted for low-density land use, but there was no need for a referendum. They simply did as their instincts bid them to, and the city reflects that fact.

The city also, of course, reflects the tension between the mutually contradictory words of Banham’s good phrase. It may be that no city can long endure half rural, half urban. It may be that no individual can long live with such schizophrenic values, especially in an area where the gentle hedonism encouraged by climate and topology rubs insistently against the essentially puritanical cast of the Middle-Western character. Los Angeles thus becomes, in Banham’s best one-liner, “the Middle West raised to flash-point,” a place where “the authoritarian dogmas of the Bible Belt and the perennial revolt against them [collide] at critical mass under the palm trees.” The contradiction is resolved in a million excesses—the hamburger stand in the shape of a giant toad,

which my wife so fondly remembers from her happy Los Angeles childhood, the fads of food and fashion always sweeping eastward, the extreme Left-Right polarization of the area’s politics.

THEN there are the freeways, Banham’s fourth ecological region. It is true that wherever they have gone, a wretched architectural style has followed, a form of constructional plain speech Banham calls “Los Angeles Dingbat.” But it is also true, as he says, that they have become a form of topographic relief in the flat and featureless plains through which they mostly run, things of interest, if not of beauty, in not very interesting places. Moreover, it is not the freeway system, as so many have contended, that made this particular metropolis explode into fragments. The system did not get established until the end of World War II, well after the communities it linked had begun to take shape. Anyway, it disturbed them very little, since it generally followed the routes of the earlier mass transportation system, that of the Pacific Interurban Railroad which, more than any single factor, determined the precise directions of the city’s sprawl.

This bit of history goes some way toward correcting the most prevalent myth about Los Angeles, which is that its character was determined by a mindless thrall to the automobile. One can, of course, fault the Angelinos for not preserving their very efficient interurban system, but not too much, I think. For one thing the car fit so neatly into the urban homesteader’s mentality, offering him what must have seemed a degree of privacy, of free choice, even of self-expression, very like that he exercised on his “ranchette.” And since Los Angeles alone of our great cities was still a-building as the car came into its own, its residents had the opportunity—which they took—to incorporate a proper road system into their cityscape more comfortably than was possible anywhere else in the U.S.

As a result, it remains the best urban highway system in the country. There is a generosity to its

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sweeping curves and to its on-and-off ramps that is unknown in the cramped East, an easy flow to its straightaways (and a careful visibility to its signs) that a commuter from Long Island must envy. Traffic jams do, of course, occur at rush hour, but the ability of a single stalled car to create a massive mess is simply unknown in Los Angeles: it takes a five-car pileup, or a jack-knifed trailer truck to do it here.

LOS ANGELES acquired its bad reputation among Easterners and other outsiders at a time when such thought as there was about urban problems held that centralization was an unmixed blessing, that Los Angeles, with its crazy-quilt of zoning laws and legal jurisdictions was a prime example of the evils of a weak city hall. Yet now that decentralization, community control, and all the other contemporary catch phrases have acquired the status of conventional wisdom, no one except Banham (whose point of view is essentially that of the aesthete) has even begun to re-examine and reevaluate the one urban complex that never was centralized. Not being expert in these matters, I can't say how it has really worked out politically and socially, though the most casual conversation indicates a high degree of interest in the neighborhood school, the local police department, etc.—maybe to that excessive point where endless argument impedes progress and reform. It is also clear that Los Angeles more or less offers what Norman Mailer promised in his "power to the neighborhoods" campaign for mayor of New York—some sort of community for almost every imaginable human type: Orange County for the reactionaries, retirement villages for the elderly, Venice for the hippies, Bel-Air for the richies, and so on down the list. They coexist suspiciously and uneasily, but coexist they do, the pressures eased by the distances between these communities as well as by the salubrious climate.

In short, the time has clearly come to rethink the issue of Los Angeles and Dr. Banham's quietly daring, and highly stimulating, exercise in benign iconoclasm provides a very engaging starting-point.

Character Revealed

ON BEING TOLD THAT HER SECOND HUSBAND HAS TAKEN HIS FIRST LOVER AND OTHER STORIES. By TESS SLESINGER. *Quadrangle*. 396 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by DAVID BROMWICH

The room (she looked round it) was very shabby. There was no beauty anywhere. She forbore to look at Mr. Tansley. Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself the little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating, as the watch begins ticking—one, two, three, one, two, three. And so on and so on, she repeated, listening to it, sheltering and fostering the still feeble pulse as one might guard a weak flame with a newspaper.

THIS tick of domestic conscience, the blank reassurance, the falling back into routine, belongs to Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. Most of Tess Slesinger's people feel the same kind of pull from the mundane, and the recording voice, too, is remarkably similar. Yet between this author and Virginia Woolf there is a difference worth noting. Miss Slesinger, one realizes quite soon, is writing about a world without generosity, without the redemptive sign. It is Mr. Ramsay singing "Each alone, we perish all," but where his wife comforts herself with "We are in the hands of the Lord," Miss Slesinger prefers to let it go in silence. Each alone, we perish all. Her characters go on through the persistent ugliness of the everyday, with their private neuroses and their small, monotonous failures.

In *The Unpossessed*, writing a farcical counterpoint to Dostoevsky, Miss Slesinger found the style most appropriate to the minute psychological tremors she wished to register. She had learned the modernist tricks without being

overwhelmed by them, so that her own version of the interior monologue showed an effortless brilliance and speed. Of course, the interior monologue is in part a satirical tool: characters can be "exposed" from within. The technique fails when the meanness of the exposure, and the fuss of rigging it, seem plainly disproportionate to the object at hand. But one felt this only rarely in Miss Slesinger's novel, and in the stories written under the same impulse—with a single exception, "Mother to Dinner"—one doesn't feel it at all. The characteristic stories in this volume are monologues, in one form or another. And in the best of them ("A Life in the Day of a Writer," "Missis Flinders," "On Being Told") the recording voice offers no resistance to the recorded; character is not exposed but revealed.

The effect, it should be added, is never quite satirical. Short stories have no time for background, for the thick social ambience of satire—and without this, incidents which might have a satirical point become small tragedies. In "Missis Flinders," a radical couple drive home from the hospital with a consolatory basket of fruit instead of a baby, having decided on abortion as the only right course in a world of starving millions. "Three days I spent in a hospital, in a Maternity Home, and I produced, with the help of my husband, one basket of fruit (tied with a ribbon, pink—for boys)." As the final chapter of *The Unpossessed* this had its bitter joke; when you read it separately, only the bitterness remains. The title story begins with a comical situation—mutual duplicity: husband concealing his affair, wife concealing her knowledge of it—but in the end there is mutual terror, and pain.

B plus for that one, little sister, you tell yourself, wearily, as you stand there hearing the door slam, and you wait there a minute but he doesn't come back, he isn't coming back, and if he were going to telephone you from the corner drug store he would have done it by now, and you walk back past the laden table and you do not sweep the cups and

DAVID BROMWICH's article, "On Reading Robert Lowell," appeared in *August*. He is a student at Yale.

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saucers off the table, nor do you scream nor do you turn on the gas nor do you telephone the boy that used to take you dancing (though you think of all these things), nor do you fall in a heap sobbing on the empty bed (though that is what you thought you wanted to do)—you merely stand at the kitchen sink letting the hot water run to grow hotter, and you say to the cold walls reproachfully, “Oh Dill, Dill . . . oh Jimsie, Jimsie . . .” and when the doorbell rings at last you know that it is not Dill and not Jimsie but merely the man collecting last week’s laundry.

The terror springs from those ghosts of meaning, what didn’t get said or done coming back to haunt what did.

Certain of the pieces have an interest, partly non-literary, as samples of “atmosphere” from the 1930’s. The author herself does not much care for historical local color, but she is intrigued by the peculiar nervousness in the air, how strangely people suddenly behave. And it is always funny, in some grim way, as with the caddish chief of an advertising firm, cozening his unruly workers into submission:

“Strike,” said Peter Bender, dilating his handsome nostrils as though he had come across a hair in his soup. “Strike!” he said, turning it gracefully into a rather graceless joke. “Strike!” he said, almost baby-talking it, kidding it, turning it round in his mouth like a teething ring and sticking it between his teeth to show he didn’t fear it.

The observation comes from “The Mouse-Trap,” an exemplary story. There is the feminine point of view, which makes Miss Slesinger’s gaze more exact, her manner more exacting; and there is the triumphantly unlovely tale of a girl from Kansas, a young secretary full of high ambition, who idolizes the boss, gets laid by the boss, and then leaves his service to become another of the unruly “mice.” In “Jobs in the Sky” one finds something in a similar vein about a young man, unsuccessful because it lapses out of focus and grows rather tired by the end.

Miss Slesinger is admirable, throughout her book, in rejecting the prettiness which forms the first real temptation of a short-story writer. This temptation means, of course, “creating a mood,” writing a shorthand novel in which the content is all gentle implication and muzziness. But Miss Slesinger would rather get down to business, flinging her readers straight to the middle of the action. A flexible prose measures every fact, selecting the right detail from the harsh, resistant world Miss Slesinger inhabits. And that world finally turns coherent, with characters nodding to each other across stories. This is, in quite another sense, an extremely *crowded* sort of fiction. Inanimate objects telegraph messages to people, as when the novelist in “A Life in the Day of a Writer” hears his typewriter laughing at him. The story reaches a pitch of elation—the manic reverse of depression, which is the only happy ending Miss Slesinger allows—when the novelist turns into one of his own characters as he walks down the street.

If the straightforward monologues represent the most distinctive (that is, the most personal) fiction of their author, two of the remaining stories seem to be entirely uncharacteristic. With “White on Black” it is easy to say why. This is a slight piece, describing the rise and fall in the popularity of two token Negroes at a mildly integrated school, and one suspects (and the date confirms) that it was written before Miss Slesinger had seen her way around the hardest problem of fiction: conventionality. “The Answer on the Magnolia Tree” is, on the other hand, the longest thing in the book—also the most ambitious, and an exception to whatever one might care to remark about Miss Slesinger. Several points of view, separate melodies, have been orchestrated through the events of a single day: a method that works far better here than it did, over a longer time and distance, in *The Unpossessed*. Indeed, from a technical standpoint, the story could hardly have been matched by Miss Slesinger’s contemporaries.

The characters are variously students, teachers, administrators, and groundskeepers at a rich girls’ school, where the girls are suffused with the magnolia scent of spring and the women who instruct them, *sans homme* one and all, feel their own autumn descending. Although a speck of irony drifts in now and then, the prevailing mood is idyllic. One of the girls, Linda, has stayed out too late with her beau, but all is forgiven since her parents are after all important donors. Quoting Longfellow, the headmistress warns Linda that she is standing at the crossroads of life, “with reluctant feet, where the brook and river meet.” Linda repeats this to her friends, and a girl perks up from the bathroom, “I’m *where the brook and river meet!*” The tone is wonderfully sustained, and never slick, though it often reminds one of other schoolgirl fiction: two parts amused, one part bemused. The final note is lingeringly bittersweet, but the bitterness here does not protest; the story deserves a wide and appreciative audience of the kind that Miss Slesinger’s fiction, on the whole, does not seem likely to get.

THE stories collected in this volume span the period 1929-35, during which the author did all of her “serious” writing. Miss Slesinger lived in Hollywood from 1935 until her death ten years later, and though she would have been just right for the acerbic comedies of that time, her talent seems to have been employed in other directions: *The Good Earth* and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* are listed as among her screen credits. The publisher knows it is customary, at this point, to say something about the sadness of promise unfulfilled. But, really, there is nothing unfulfilled in this work, nothing promised that is not performed. About half these stories are as fully achieved as short fiction can be, and the volume itself has lost none of the particular sharpness of touch that must have suggested its title thirty-five years ago, *Time: The Present*.

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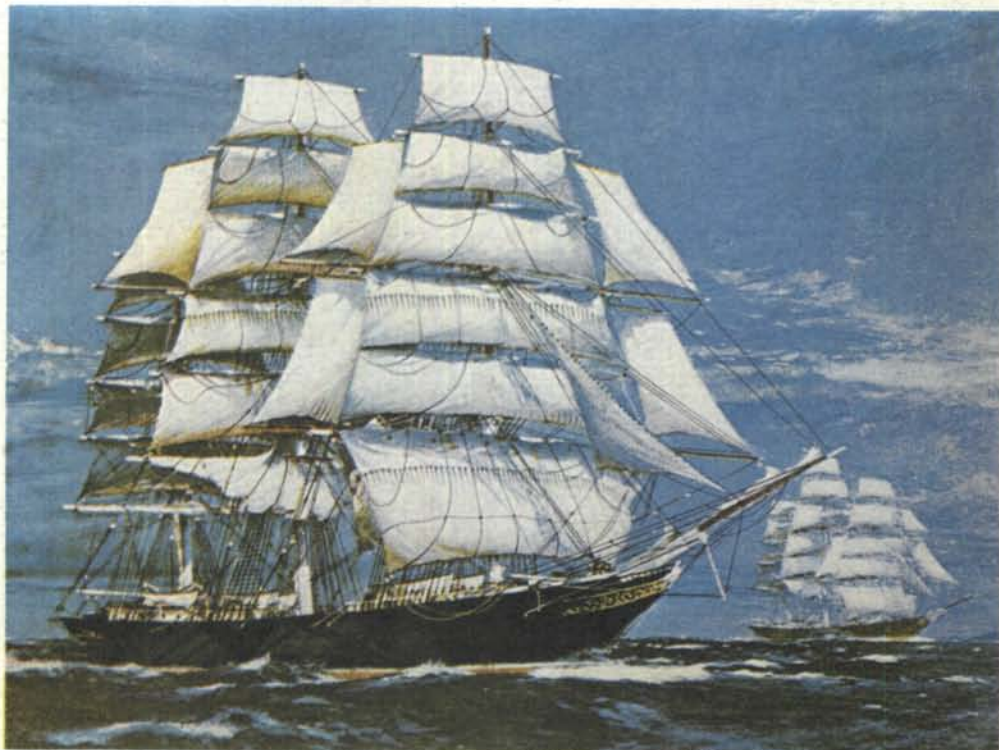
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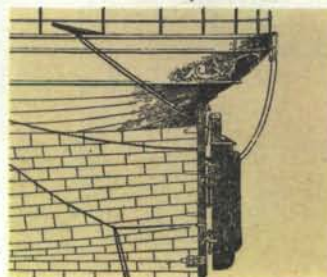


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Capt. Moodie,
Cutty's commander
in her most famous race.

Cutty's jury rudder,
seen in drydock.



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